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SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

EVANGELICAL, DEVOTIONAL AND PRACTICAL.

ADAPTED TO THE PROMOTION OF

CHRISTIAN PIETY, FAMILY RELIGION, AND YOUTHFUL VIRTUE.

BY JOSEPH LATHROP, D. D.
PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN WEST SPRINGFIELD.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

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WILLIAM S. SH
Clerk of the District of Mas

PREFACE

TO THE

SECOND EDITION.

THE Author of the following work, when he learned, that the three first volumes *were out of print, and that another Edition was requested by the public and intended by the publisher, carefully revised them, and made such corrections, as appeared to be requisite. These three volumes go forth accompanied with the two others which were recently printed, so that the whole work now becomes complete, in five volumes.*

To the two first volumes *are added several Sermons not before printed, which are at the end of the volumes, and are on such subjects as were deemed most interesting.*

In the third volume, which embraces the whole Epistle to the EPHESIANS, *there is prefixed to each Sermon an appropriate title, and to the volume itself a complete table of contents; and thus an omission, before justly complained of, is supplied.*

The candor, with which this work has been received by the public, is acknowledged with respectful gratitude. It is hoped, that the work has been, and still may be, useful to the attentive reader. Inaccuracies of composition, candor will readily

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. S. *It is in contemplation to collect a*
, in a volume suited to accompany
thor's Occasional Sermons. *If t*
uld be prosecuted, the Sermons will
l corrected.

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SERMON I.

God glorified in Heaven for his Works of Creation and Providence.

REVELATION iv. 11.

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

T. John, in this chapter, describes a vision which he had of the heavenly worship. He saw a throne placed in heaven, with the appearance of divine glory upon it; and seats disposed around, on which sat the elders, clothed in white raiment, with golden crowns on their heads; and in the midst, and round about the throne, were the principal angels. These began the worship with celebrating the infinite purity of the divine nature, and ascribing all glory to him, who sat on the throne; and then the elders joined their voices, falling before the throne, casting down their crowns, and saying, *Thou art worthy to receive glory, and honour, and power; for*

1. The heavenly church acknowledge
eated all things.

If the world was created, there was a
did not exist. Though it received
rm from preexisting matter, yet this m
some time or other, have received its
om the same hand which moulded it in
ous form. *The worlds were framed b*
God; so that things which are seen
ade of things which do appear. If the
ernal and self existent, it would be in
r that which exists necessarily, is neces
is, and not liable to change or dissolu
e see these material things continually
teration and decay; we may therefore
at they are the creatures of time.

As all creation had a beginning, so th
had a *late* beginning. The scriptura
hich dates it but a few thousand year
some measure confirmed by observati
teness of our most ancient histories, t
ction of arts and sciences, and even of
phy of the world, and the vast tracts,
main unpopulated, or but sparsely
ough mankind have, in general, been

away, before he employed his power, wisdom, and goodness, or made beings to know, enjoy, and praise him ?"

This question has been asked, and urged as an objection against the lateness of creation.

But the objection, if it may be called one, can respect only that part of creation of which Moses has given an account. Space is boundless, as well as duration endless. Beyond our system—beyond these visible heavens, there is room for innumerable worlds to have existed, millions of ages before this part of the universe rose into being. Besides, the objection itself, when it is examined, vanishes into nothing. If the world was created, there was a time when it began. And if, for its origin, you go back as many millions of ages as there are sunbeams in the heavens, still there was a time, when it had not existed six thousand years. And this objection might then be made, as well as now ; for it was then as true, as it is now, that there had passed a duration without beginning. The difficulty in such cases is, we attempt by time to measure eternity ; and the measure is not adequate to the object.

From the things which exist, we know there is a God. *The invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and godhead.*

If God created *all things*, then a creating power belongs not to creatures. It is a power, which we may suppose them incapable of receiving ; for creation is the highest act of Divinity that we can conceive of ; probably there can be none higher.

By the ability and ingenuity of a single man many things have been done, which to the unexperienced appear surprising. The combined skill and power of a number have produced works far greater still. But all their works are only giving a new

any thing made, that was made." H
must conclude, that he is not merely a
ature, but properly divine, possessed
ver, and entitled to divine honour.
How vast is creation! Even this wo
view it in comparison with the little
ich inhabit it, appears a mighty thi
at is this, with all its innumerable in
he universe! When we step abroad,
eyes up to the heavens, what an as
ne do we behold! What multitudes
we there see scattered around, and su
ths of space! At what an amazing dis
y placed from us, and from one anothe
all is the spot which our sight comman
ed with unlimited space! How incor
number of bodies which we see, comp
se which may be supposed to exist!
nation has taken its most distant flight, s
is it from having reached the bounds
1! And yet all these things were create
ield by one almighty, omnipresent, et
He spake and they were made; he c
and they stood fast. By his word the

pleasure; or for his *will,* as the word properly signifies.

If you ask, why God made the world, and upholds it; why he framed the universe, and formed this globe, in such time and manner, as he has; this song of angels gives the proper answer. "All things were made for his pleasure." The apostle Paul expresses the same sentiment: *He works all things according to the counsel of his own will.*

There has been much inquiry, and some controversy among Christians, concerning God's ultimate end in the work of creation; whether it was his own glory, or the exercise of his goodness in the communication of happiness. But the apostle, in the text, cuts the matter short. He introduces the spirits in heaven as celebrating the wonders of creation, and ascribing them all to God's *will.* Here is a plain intimation, that these speculations on the supreme and ultimate end of an infinite and all perfect Being, in the formation of all his works, are too high for mortals. Angels, with greater modesty, bow down and adore unsearchable wisdom. Wise ends he certainly has in all his works. But farther than he has given us an account of his matters, his counsels are too deep for us.

Creation is a vast and stupendous work. It is but a small part of it which comes within our observation; and even this we know but imperfectly. And if we know not the work itself, much less can we know all the purposes for which it was intended. For us it is enough to know, that all things were made by a most perfect Being, and that for his pleasure they are and were created.

But though we cannot comprehend the works of God, nor determine that they were made for this or that purpose solely or supremely, yet there are certain uses to which we see many of them adapted; and *these* it becomes us to observe.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. The earth also is full of his riches. His power and goodness every where appear. Manifold are his works; in wisdom he has made them all.

As the works which we behold, display his perfections, and manifest, in a particular manner, his wisdom, power and benevolence; so it is certainly his will, that intelligent creatures should attend to the displays and manifestations which he has made of himself, and exercise toward him correspondent affections and regards. Though we cannot affirm, that this, that, or the other, was the only or ultimate end of all creation, yet we know that God made rational creatures to serve him; discovers to them his character, that they may love him; bestows on them his goodness, that they may trust him; and calls them to himself, that they may enjoy him. The language of angels, is the voice of reason. *Thou art worthy to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*

This brings us to our last observation,

III. That all intelligent beings are bound to glorify God for his works of creation and providence.

1. These works should lead us to the knowledge and contemplation of their great and glorious Author.

God's works are wonderful, sought out by them who have pleasure in them. While the philosopher explores them for the enlargement of his mind, the amusement of his fancy, and the investigation of their uses in common life, the good Christian will regard them in a higher view. He will look into them, that he may gain a juster knowledge, and raise a nobler conception of the Creator. He will behold God in them, and contemplate the wisdom, goodness, and power which

they display. When he sees the works, he will see God working. He will consider himself as surrounded by the Deity; animated by his breath; inspired with reason by his spirit; sustained by his hand; supplied by his goodness; guided by his counsel; and protected by his power.

Of the wicked it is said, God is not in all their thoughts. What stupidity is this! Is God always with them, and working before them? Does he manifest himself in the heavens, in the earth, in rain and sunshine, in winds and storms, in succeeding their labours, and blessing the works of their hands? And, Can they banish him from their thoughts? If we live without God in a world, which is every where so full of him, What are we better than the heathen? We know God, but we glorify him not as God, neither are thankful. *Better* than the heathen? Nay, we are inferiour to the mere animal. "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib."

2. We should glorify God in his works, by improving them to awaken in our souls pious affections to him.

The Being who made and upholds so vast a system; who supplies such innumerable multitudes; who has given understanding to many; who has provided for their subsistence in this state, and their happiness through eternity, must be great, and wise, and good. To him then are due our highest regards. We should tremble at his presence, reverence his majesty, submit to his pleasure, trust his care, admire his character, thank him for his benefits, and acknowledge him in all our ways.

In tracing the connexions, and investigating the causes of things, the philosopher is led up to the Deity as the grand first cause of all. But if he introduces into his scheme the agency of a God, only as he admits the power of attraction, magnetism

and electricity, to solve the phenomena of nature, he stops far short of the proper end of his researches. The Christian will contemplate the Deity, not merely as a power producing great effects; but as a Being, whose power is guided by wisdom, justice and benevolence. While he admires the works, he will love and fear, trust and adore the God who made them.

3. The works of God should invite us to him in the humble exercises of devotion. He who offers praise, glorifies God. The Being who made all things, must himself be independent. The things which are made must be dependent on him. When we look up to this glorious Being, we should sink down into the most humble thoughts of ourselves. What are we amidst this vast creation! How wonderful is his condescension, that he attends to our wants, and visits us every moment! When we consider the heavens, the work of his fingers, the moon and stars, which he has ordained, How just is the reflection, What is man that he should be mindful of him?—Does it not become such dependent and indebted creatures daily to call on God for what they want, and daily to thank him for what they receive? He is not indifferent to us: Shall we be indifferent to him? We daily stand in his presence, and receive bounties from his hand: Shall we pay no reverence to his character, and make no returns for his beneficence? From just apprehensions of God, and of ourselves, a spirit of devotion must arise.

4. We are to glorify God for our own existence.

If we are to praise him for creation in general, surely some gratitude is due for our distinguished rank in the creation. *I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. How precious are thy thoughts to me! How great is the sum of them!*

God has given us a rational existence; made known to us his will; taken us under his particular care; furnished us with the means of virtue in this state, and eternal happiness in the next; and all along the passage through this to the future world, the blessings of his goodness attend us. Is not existence, under these circumstances, to be regarded as a privilege? If a happy existence is to be valued, an existence accompanied with present enjoyments, and with the means of obtaining higher enjoyments hereafter, is to be contemplated with gratitude and joy.

Perhaps in the gloom of a discontented mind, you complain of life as a burthen.

Impatience may undoubtedly draw up a long list of grievances. But from this list, let your sober reason make proper deductions.

In the first place, strike out your *imaginary* troubles—those which arise from pride, vanity, avarice, habit, irregular passion, and extravagant expectation. Strike out next the troubles which are merely *negative*, consisting only in the removal of blessings which you have enjoyed for a while, and which, if you had never enjoyed them, you never would have desired. Strike out also your *comparative* evils, which owe their existence to an apprehension, that your neighbours possess benefits denied to you—benefits, which you would not have thought of, if you had not seen them in possession of others. Make these deductions, and your list of grievances will be much reduced. Call gratitude to make the estimate, and your blessings will be found to exceed your troubles.

You have more days of health and comfort, than of sickness and pain. In a course of regular industry, you have more success than disappointment. In your connexions, you have many friends; few enemies—perhaps none. Remember also, that

:istence is to be regretted: "For r
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rt of the human race will be miser
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is stage, more probable that he will l
an happy. And if this is his state, V
there to be thankful for existence?"
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the proportion of the saved will
nall, a question not subject to human
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en there is cause of thankfulness for ou
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hether we accept or reject it, still C
ur folly alters not the nature of goodi
inishes the obligation of gratitude.
You are not to consider the plan of
the scheme of a lottery, in which
hance for success is according to the p
rizes to blanks; but as a moral and r

salvation. To determine the probability of your success, you need not inquire how many, or how few will be saved: You are only to enquire, what you yourselves are doing. In the destruction of the old world, Noah and his household, though few, only eight souls, were preserved. At the wedding supper, the one unworthy guest was cast into utter darkness. Whatever may be the number of the righteous, or of the wicked, the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.

The apostle says to the Corinthians, *They who run in a race, run all; but one receiveth the prize. So run, that ye may obtain. I so run, not as uncertainly.* In a race, there is only one prize; and whatever exertions the combatants make, it is only the foremost who wins. In the Christian race it is otherwise. Here is a prize proposed to each; and all may obtain, if they will run well. Therefore the apostle says, *So run, that ye may obtain.* Ye may all obtain, who enter on the race, and finish the course. Your success will not be influenced by the good or ill success of others: It will be determined by your own sincerity, activity and perseverance. *I so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one who beateth the air; but I keep under my body to bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

5. If creation deserves our praise, redemption deserves it still more, for this is our hope.

Creation displays God's wisdom, power and goodness; redemption displays his holiness, justice and grace. If it is matter of gratitude, that we were called from nothing into rational existence; it is matter of higher gratitude, that we are recovered from darkness, bondage and fear, to a state of light,

rnally, we are to glorify God
which are opened before us.

Here we may know something
for creation is all around us, and pı
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and be like them; see as they see, a
praise.

We behold many wonders of Go
goodness in this earth, and in those
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will crowd upon our sight, when w
new earth, and contemplate the ne
the opening of these new scenes, a
will be extinguished, like a lamp l
sun. *Behold*, says the God of glo

saved shall walk in the light thereof, and there shall be no night there.

While we dwell in this lower creation, let us raise our thoughts to the superiour world, and here begin the devout and holy exercises which are to employ us there.

If all things were created for God's pleasure, let us remember, that for his pleasure we were created too. We are to live, not to ourselves, but to him—to make, not our own, but his will, the rule of our actions—to please, not ourselves, but him whose will is perfect—and to expect happiness, not in the world, but in his favour.

Be not then conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

God works, not for our Sakes but for his Name's Sake.

EZEKIEL xxxvi. 32.

Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lo unto you ;———

TO the Jews, now in c lon, the prophet, in this chapter God's gracious promise of their re own land ; and describes the happ which should attend it. They sho ed in their former privileges—shou tiful effusions of the Holy Spirit—s ed with all temporal and spiritua in a word, the Lord would be thei should be his people. But lest, rich and gracious

saith the Lord I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel; but for my holy name's sake, which ye had profaned among the heathens, whither ye went. I have had pity for my holy name. I will sanctify my great name, which ye had profaned. The heathen shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

The reason of God's granting to the captive Jews, a restoration to their country, and so many attending privileges, was founded, not in their worthiness, but his own mercy—not in a partial regard to them, but in a general regard to the human race.

We will illustrate our text—

I. As it respects the case of the Jews in particular.

II. In its more general application to others.

I. We will consider the text as it immediately respects the case of the Jews.

Their deliverance from Babylon was eminently the work of God—*It was He, who did this.* Taken in all its circumstances, it evidently appears to have been wrought by a divine hand.

The duration of their captivity was exactly foretold, before it began; and Cyrus, the prince who granted their release, was expressly named in prophecy, before he was born. During a period of seventy years, they were preserved a distinct people in the land of their enemies, while other nations were swallowed up and lost. They enjoyed some peculiar privileges in their captivity, especially the privilege of exercising their own religion, and attending the ministrations of their prophets. Some of their prophets and priests, men of distinguished abilities, gifts and virtues, were, by a wonderful concurrence of circumstances, admitted to great honour and influence in the court of Babylon, where, uncorrupted by their preferment, they retained their zeal for the religion, and concern for the interest of

the Chaldean empire. He favou
and grants them liberty to return t
Under the authority of the decree p
his successors continue to them thi
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ing their city and temple. Some
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In this great event, utterly improl
foresight, so conspicuous was the d
when God turned again the captivity
said among the heathen, *The* LORD
things for them.

God would have them consider,
done, not for their sakes, but for his

It was done, not on account of t
but from pure *mercy.*

They had

when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when it was said unto them, These are the people of the Lord, and they are gone forth out of his land." As if it had been said, "By their evil practices they have brought a reproach on my name, and given occasion to the heathen to say, See what profligate and impious wretches these Jews are, who call themselves the servants of a holy God! No wonder he has expelled them out of the country, which he gave them." When God promises their restoration, he calls upon them to remember all that they had done, and to be ashamed and confounded for their own ways.

This deliverance was not intended principally for their benefit; but for a more general and extensive good. "I do this," says the Almighty, "for my name's sake, and that the heathen may know that I am the Lord."

In this work God glorified his great name. He gave a striking display of his *power*, by rescuing these feeble captives from the hands of superior enemies—of his *wisdom*, in so disposing events as to accomplish this mighty purpose—of his *foreknowledge*, in pointing out the time, manner and circumstances of their deliverance—of his *faithfulness*, in fulfilling the promises, which had long before been made in their favour—of his *goodness*, in watching over this unworthy people, and pardoning their numerous provocations—of his *holiness*, in chastising their iniquities—of his *justice*, in punishing the oppressions of their enemies—of his *sovereignty*, in casting down a superiour nation to make way for their deliverance—and of the *truth* of the *religion* instituted among them, by accomplishing the predictions of his prophets.

God did not at first set his love upon them, because they were more in number than any people; for they were then the fewest of all people. Neither

as our thoughts. It is by a variety of m
a laboured process, that we effect a sin
A variety of vast and wonderful purpo
complishes by the same means. There
ion which runs through his works. Th
seems first intended, is one step in th
order to bring about some distant and
tant design.

1. The captivity and deliverance
were the means of spreading in the worl
edge of God, and of the true religion.
The heathen were thus made to know
the Lord.

The benefits of the revelation, whic
to the Jews, were not wholly confine
They reached to other nations. The fi
tivities and dispersions of this enlighten
well as the travels of their prophets, co
disseminate far and wide the knowledge
Babylon was the most celebrated city, a
tal of the most powerful empire in th
that by means of this long captivity, th
of the true God was more extensively
it would have been, had his professed
been suffered to continue in their own

The means made use of in Providence for their deliverance, conduced to the same great end. To make way for this event, the empire of Babylon is subdued by the Medes and Persians, who of course now become acquainted with the Jews, with the religion which they profess, and with the God whom they worship. The information which Cyrus received concerning the predictions of the prophets, and the conviction which he felt of their truth and divinity, were doubtless the motives which first prompted him to release these captives. It is evident that he, as well as some preceding and following kings of Babylon, acknowledged the God of Israel to be the true and supreme God. If *they* acknowledged him, many of their subjects would follow their example. So that the Jewish revelation was, in fact, more extensive than some imagine. That which at first looks like partiality in their favour, was, in its effects, the exercise of general goodness.

2. The return of the Jews was a strong confirmation of the truth of their religion, adapted to give conviction to all who were witnesses of it.

The wonderful steps of Providence in accomplishing this event, and the exact fulfilment of the many predictions and promises which had been made concerning it, were undeniable proofs, that the God whom they worshipped, was the only true God.

3. God preserved this people, because to them were committed his sacred oracles.

Though they were a sinful nation, yet as the only instituted church and the only written revelation, were among them, he would not utterly destroy them. He spared them because a blessing for mankind was in them. As the scriptures, which they enjoyed, were ultimately designed for general benefit, God would preserve the nation to whose care he had committed them. Had these sacred writings

To Abraham was a promise made, his descendants, the Redeemer should in his seed all nations should be bles time was not yet come for the appearan mised Saviour, the nation from who spring, and who were first to be blessed sence, must be preserved. Accordi that until the time of his coming, th God's peculiar care ; though he of them, he forsook them not utterly ; tho ered them up to captivity, he dissolved tional state. But this singular care of for their sakes ; it was for the sake o general, that the blessing promised might come on the Gentiles. And th the Saviour's death, this special car withdrawn.

They are soon given up to the pow mans, by whom they are completely s scattered over the face of the earth ; this day they no where subsist in a na ty.

5. The captivity and deliverance o were events which conduced much t world for the reception of the Saviour

of his appearance. This must have been known to many besides the Jews; and from hence probably arose the prevailing expectation in those parts of the world, that some extraordinary person would appear, who should have a general dominion. Hence he is called the desire, or expectation, of all nations. And doubtless the great success, which the apostles found in preaching the gospel among the Gentiles, was, in some measure, owing to these preparatory means.

The time is coming when the knowledge of God shall cover the earth, and all nations shall see his salvation. The gospel will not always be confined to a small part of the human race. It will have a universal spread. Those means which have introduced, and hitherto maintained it, were designed for the benefit of generations to come, as well as of those which are past. God's particular favour to the Jews, will eventually prove a blessing to all nations.

REFLECTIONS.

1. This passage, in its connexion, teaches us, what is intended by the phrase, so often used in scripture, of God's working *for his own sake*, and *for his name's sake*. It is working, that his name may be more extensively known and regarded among men.

This is evidently the sense, in which it is used in this chapter. *I do this for my name's sake, and I will sanctify my great name; and the heathen shall know, that I am the Lord.* So it is repeatedly used in the 20th chapter. *I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted among the heathen, in whose sight I made myself known.*

When we meet with such phrases, we must not understand them, as if the independent, allperfect,

...ness, or character, known among his
tures, and bringing them to acknowle
obey him. What he does for his own s
spect to their good, and is suited to ren
tuous and happy. So that the phrase, i
est manner, expresses his free and
goodness.

When a man is said to do any thin
sake, we consider him as acting selfish
out regard to the interest of others. B
is, in scripture, applied to the Deity in
nobler sense, as importing his kind and
tentions toward moral beings. Whe
his name known, it is, not that he him
his creatures, may be better and happi

In like manner we are to understand
phrase of God's acting *for his own glo*
not to make himself more glorious; f
nitely glorious in his nature: His gloric
sists in his unlimited and immutable
But it is to manifest and display amo
tures his glorious character, that they
and love him, adore and serve him.
quires them to admire and worship him,
he is benefited by their affections or pra

In a sense consistent with this, we must understand the command, *to do all things to the glory of God.* We must not imagine, that our righteousness is gain to him—that our services turn to his real benefit—that our praises add any thing to his excellency. Such ideas of him would be impious. But we then act to his glory, when we imitate his goodness by doing good to mankind—when we obey his commands on the motives which he proposes—and when we shew forth the glory of his character, in such a manner as to promote the virtue and happiness of our fellow creatures. *Herein is our heavenly Father glorified, that we bring forth much fruit.* We are to *abound in the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God. Our light is to shine before men, that, seeing our good works, they may glorify God.* We are to *give glory to God, by exercising repentance and making confession of our sins. Whatever we do,* we are to *do it to his glory, giving no offence to any man, and not seeking our own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*

2. Our subject leads us to admire the grand scheme of God's providence.

His dispensations, both of mercy and correction toward particular persons and nations, look beyond those who are the immediate objects of them; and produce effects more distant than we can trace—more extensive than we can comprehend—more numerous than we can conceive. The mercies granted to the Jews, were not for their sakes only, but for his name's sake, that it might be known among the heathen. When we contemplate the history of his dealings toward them, we see consequences of great and general importance produced by means, which seemed at first to respect them only. The ways of his providence are still as wise and gracious—still as complex and interesting, as those which are the subject of sacred history.

and eagerly pursued. And besides this
of things, which we are able to discov
doubtless a more remote and important
which, in the present state, we neve
"What God does we know not now, but
hereafter."

We see, or think we see, worldly go
distributed with great inequality. Son
and others poor. Health of body and suc
siness, attend one man; sickness, disa
and perplexity, are the painful lot of ano
wonder why there is this difference.
complains, that God's ways are not equal.
are matters concerning which we are not
judging. We see but in part. The in
which corrupt the rich man's enjoymer
hidden consolations which refresh the sp
poor and afflicted, may essentially alter t
The external difference which we obser
more owing to men's different tempers
manner of conduct, than we imagine. A
far as this difference is properly and dire
lential, it is the effect, not of partiality
preme Disposer, but of his general goodn
circumstances of a particular person are o

condition will affect another, and what consequences will issue from particular events, we are incompetent judges of the wisdom and equity of providence. He who governs the world, is a God of truth, and without iniquity. He is a rock, his way is perfect; just and right is he. Let us never suspect his ways are unequal. Let us never indulge an impatient, murmuring spirit; but learn in every state to be content.

3. We see the proper foundation of submission and gratitude under all the dealings of God. It is a humble sense of our unworthiness. *Be ashamed and confounded for all your ways*, says the prophet.

If you enjoy prosperity, imagine not, that heaven gives it *for your sake*, either for your worthiness, or *solely* for your use; but remember that God distributes the bounties of his providence, with a sovereign hand, to the just and unjust, as his wisdom sees best—that his bounty is the source of all your enjoyments—that you are not worthy of the least of all the mercies which he has shewed you—and that you are to glorify him by an imitation of his goodness, in promoting virtue and happiness among your fellow mortals.

If you suffer adversity, utter no complaints—indulge no impatience; but be confounded for all your iniquities. These have forfeited the blessings which you have lost, and merited the pains which you feel. Every good is undeserved—every affliction is less than you deserve. The more humble thoughts you entertain of yourselves, the more contented and thankful you will be, and the less disposed to complain of Providence, and to envy or despise your fellow men.

Humility in the heart, is the groundwork of religion. Till we know ourselves, we shall neither love God, nor our duty. When we know ourselves, we shall be humble, for we can find nothing

The proper effect of God's mercies,
into a godly sorrow for our sins. Not
does he grant them, but that we may b
and confounded for all our ways. I
will lead an ingenious mind to repen
humble penitent takes serious notice o
God, and sees mercy in those disp
which he once complained. He exam
and discovers iniquity in those works c
which once he gloried. He was fo
without the law; but when the cc
comes, sin revives, and he dies. Whe
ters, the offence abounds. He sees th
is not in himself—he repairs to the m
He remembers, and is confounded, an
his mouth any more because of his
God is pacified toward him for all tha
Let us consider and know ourselves,
plate the ways of God's providence a
we shall admire his wisdom and love,
demn our own folly and ingratitude.
O Lord, not unto us; but unto thy n
for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sa

SERMON III.

God works, not for our Sakes only, but for his Name's Sake.

EZEKIEL xxxvi. 32.

Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you;———

THE deliverance of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon is the work of God here referred to. This was attended with such circumstances, as proved it to be eminently *his* work. When the captivity of Sion was turned, then said they among the heathen, "The Lord hath done great things for them." Under such a sudden and surprising change of condition, there was danger, that, being lifted up with pride, they would vainly imagine, their own virtue had entitled them to so great a favour, and God had too high a regard for them to punish them any more. This caution is therefore repeatedly given them, *Not for your sakes do I this, be it known unto you, but for my holy name's sake, which ye had profaned among the heathen. Be ashamed and confounded for all your ways.*

II. The same may, with equal truth every favour which God grants, eithe *lar persons*—to *communities*—or to the

1. The benefits which God bestows *sonally*, are the fruits of *his benevolenc desert ;* and intended not merely for *ou* but for the glory of *his name*, by rende useful in our sphere.

The apostle says, "None of us live and no man dieth to himself; for whet we live to the Lord; and whether we to the Lord; whether we live therefore are the Lord's." As we are not made ourselves, so we ought not to live solel ends. We are the servants of him wh first, and who preserves us still: And not by our own humour, are our lives t ed. We then do his will the best, and glory the most, when we direct our abi portunities to the promotion of virtue a among his rational creatures.

No man dieth to himself. God orde

taught and inculcated in the course of his life. And in the other world where he enjoys the fruits of his piety and goodness, he may still, in ways unknown to us, do much to advance the felicity of moral beings—may perhaps do more than he ever did, or could do, here below. *As he lived to the Lord, so he dies to the Lord.*

"Ye are not your own," says the Apostle, "for ye are bought with a price: Wherefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."—"The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him who died for them, and rose again."

If we are wholly God's property, then such is every thing that we possess. If our life and death are not for our sakes only, but for his name's sake, then all his particular gifts are to be regarded in the same light, and improved to nobler purposes than our own immediate interest.

Thus we are to regard all the gifts of *Nature.* As God hath made different orders of intelligences, so in each order there is a gradation; and all to promote the general happiness. The singular genius of a *Newton* was given, not merely that he might amuse and gratify himself in stating the tides, measuring the distances of planets, and tracing the paths of comets; but that he might explore the vast fields of science, and collect treasures for the general benefit of mankind.

Who is a wise man, says St. James, *and endued with knowledge? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom—And the wisdom, which is from above, is full of mercy and good fruits.*

You have nothing, but what you received; and if you received it, Why should you glory, as if it

And thus we all view the gifts
sess.

When men are exalted to an e
at once see, that not for their sal
this, but for his name's sake.
promoted, not that he may live
luxury, acquire boundless wealt
self in honour; but that he may
kind. As the minister of God fo
to attend continually on this very
er in the church is to watch for so
to the flock over which he is mad
feed them whom Christ has pu
blood. He is Christ's servant fo
must seek not theirs, but them—
but the profit of many, that they n

But, Are rulers and ministers t
are bound to act on disinterested
every body else be selfish? No:
tion which lies on them, exten
have a larger portion of worldly
around you, remember you rece
If you acquired it by your indust

enjoy; that they do good; that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

If we are to live, not to ourselves, but to God; we are to use our property, not to our own ends, but to his glory. To his glory we apply it, when we improve it for the benefit of our fellow men. "He who hath pity on the poor," says Solomon, "lendeth to the Lord." The words of our saviour are to the same purpose. "What ye have given to my brethren, ye have given to me." What we thus give to God, we give him out of his own. So David acknowledges. "Who am I? and what is my people that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. All this store that we have prepared for thy name, cometh of thine hand; it is all thine own."

The poor man feels the justness of these observations, and he wishes the ruler, the minister, and the rich man would apply them. But, Is there nothing for which you are indebted to God? Nothing which you owe to mankind? If you have health or strength, or skill, this is also the gift of heaven, and you are under the same obligation as others to do good according to your ability. To you the Apostle says, "Labour with your hands the thing which is good." Why?—For yourself only? No; but "that you may have to give to them who need;" i. e. to them who cannot work with their hands as you can. If you have been delivered from sickness, or from death; it is not merely for your own sake; but that you may glorify God in the improvement of life and health.

If the head of a family is spared; it is that he may guide and instruct his children, train them up

tuous and useful life. We are
God keeps us night and day, g
protects our slumbers, merely fo
we may eat and drink, and spor
we may acquire wealth to be th
heap while we live, and wasted
dead. It is for the nobler purp
and benevolence to mankind.

We may add farther—The gi
as well as those of Nature and
more general purposes, than the
whom they are immediately bes

It is not owing to ourselves,
ing love of the independent Go
was sent into our guilty world.
our previous choice, but to the
his sovereign providence, that
the advantages of the gospel.
us these advantages? One rea
in the diligent improvement of t
out our own salvation. But thi
also to assist others in the same
is to communicate to his childre
important knowledge, which he
the gospel of Christ. Christia

good manners—lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble them, and thereby many be defiled.

We of the present generation enjoy the gospel, not for our sakes only, but for the sake of succeeding generations. We are to transmit it to our children, and make such provision for its continuance, that they who come after us may enjoy it as amply as we have done before them. It is committed into our hands, as a sacred deposit, for the benefit of those around us, and those who shall succeed us. While we are working out our own salvation, we are to remember that this is but a part of our work. As it is not solely for our own sakes, that God has given us the means of salvation; so it is not singly on our own account, that we are to value and use them.

The Christian is to attend on the instituted worship of God, both for his own edification, and for the encouragement of others. He is to live in the practice of all good works, both that he may obtain the reward of righteousness, and that others, beholding his example, may glorify God.

The conversion of a sinner is, in the wisdom and goodness of God, intended for the benefit of others, as well as for the salvation of him, who is the immediate subject of this grace. St. Paul says of himself, "I, who was a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious, obtained mercy—and the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering for a pattern to them, who should afterwards believe on him to life everlasting."

You wonder perhaps why some great sinners are, by the uncommon grace of God, recovered, while others, less guilty than they, are suffered to go on still in their trespasses.

sake. As it could not be at all for tl
so neither is it altogether for their b
so that they may be influential in e
repentance of others.

The conversion of one may be th
occasion of the conversion of many.
ly was in the case of Paul. Who cc
jurious to the cause of truth, than h
continued a Pharisee ?—Who more
after he became a Christian ? How
prevented—how much good was dc
version of this one man ? What an
to sinners under a sense of guilt, is
divine mercy ?—How many were
Paul's preaching in the course of h
What lasting and extensive benefi
received from the writings which h
was a chosen vessel to Christ to b
mong the Gentiles, as well as the Je
al abilities, his education and ac
when his heart was sanctified by g
qualified him for so great a work.

The conversion of every sinne
within a narrower sphere. Every c

I proceed to observe,

2. As *personal* blessings are designed for the benefit of many, so blessings granted to *societies* are intended for the general good of mankind.

The national deliverance of the Jews from the Egyptian servitude, and afterward from the Babylonian captivity, was vouchsafed, not so much to render *them* important, as to display the glory of God's name among the heathen. The publick institutions of religion enjoyed by them, were made subservient to the happiness of many other nations.

Revolutions in favour of liberty, in a particular country, may be productive of interesting consequences in lands far remote, and in ages long to come.

The revolution, which has taken place in America, is operating to great, and we hope, happy events elsewhere. What God has done for us, was not only for our sakes, but for the benefit of mankind in other regions of the globe, and in other periods of time. And though Liberty in her progress, will meet with violent opposition, and, in her conflicts, will suffer dire calamities, yet we cannot doubt, but she will finally triumph.

We trust also, that this revolution will prove friendly to the interest of pure religion.

It is indeed complained, that infidelity much prevails. But perhaps its prevalence is more in appearance, than in reality; and it rather throws off its former disguise, than gains additional strength. There is greater freedom of inquiry, and more liberality of sentiment, than in years past: Learning is also more cultivated, and knowledge more generally diffused. That spirit of liberty, which sprang up here, and is now spreading, in the world, will probably render the civil governments of nations more tolerant to free religion, as well as more congenial to the rights of mankind. As learning becomes more common in the body of the people, it will of

truth will bear the strictest inquir
in an inquisitive age, some nove
started and pursued for a while, ye
ually be more extensively known,
believed.

The changes, which we have s
never answer all the purposes, wl
dom has contemplated; but they
greater and better purposes of
They have already contributed n
less will contribute more to the adv
ful knowledge, liberality of sentim
tercourse of nations: And as the
there will be more room for relig
course and be glorified.

We are apt to contemplate eve
scale of self interest. The Deity
the extended scale of benevolence.
pectations are usually disappointed.
of divine goodness will be accompli
gard events only in reference to o
est, we shall never find them agree

Farther—The gospel, which is given to a particular people, is given them for the benefit of other nations—not merely for their own.

The Apostle observes, that the preaching and reception of it in Thessalonica, proved the means of its general diffusion; for from thence sounded out the word of God, through Macedonia and Achaia; yea, in every place the faith of the Thessalonians was spread abroad. He says to the Ephesians, "God, who is rich in mercy, hath quickened us together with Christ, that in the ages to come, he might shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness to us by Jesus Christ." "He hath made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to the good pleasure which he purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth." To the Romans, he says, "The fall of the Jews," who rejected the Saviour, "was the riches of the Gentiles." The persecutions which the Apostles suffered from the Jews, drove them to other nations, and thus proved the occasion of the general spread of the gospel. "But, How much more their fullness?" The final conversion of the Jews shall conduce to the ingathering of the fullness of the Gentiles. "As in time past the Gentiles have not believed God, but now have obtained mercy through the unbelief of the Jews," which has occasioned the diffusion of knowledge among them, "even so also have *these* not believed, that they, through God's mercy to the Gentiles, may finally obtain mercy." The gospel, which, through the infidelity of the Jews, is come to the Gentiles, will be preserved in the world, and one day be communicated from the Gentiles to the Jews. "Behold, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" But,

When God sent his Son iron
us from guilt and ruin, it was not
but for his name's sake, that t
dom, grace and holiness mi
throughout the whole intellectu
gels in heaven praise God for the
deeming love to mankind. They
that there is on earth peace,
They desire to look into this a
which, by the publication of the
their view, as well as *ours*.
preach among the Gentiles the u
of Christ, not only to make *men*
lowship of the mystery, which
from ages; but also to the in
principalities and powers in heav
be known by the church the
of God. Angels now join with
song to him who was slain, an
by his blood: And every intelle
being, through the creation of G
will ascribe, riches and blessing,
our, to him who sits on the throne
forever and ever.

The calamities, which he sends among men, are designed to promote that virtue and righteousness, on which the happiness of rational beings depends. His mercies to particular persons terminate not with the immediate receivers; but in their operation, run on and spread around, beyond the reach of imagination. Yea, blessings bestowed on the human race, contribute to the improvement and joy of angels.

Under such a government, Who shall complain? In obedience to it, Who can but be happy? The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice, and the multitude of the isles be glad. This is the united voice of the myriads which surround his throne; "Praise our God, all ye his servants; and ye who fear him, both small and great. Give praise, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns. Be glad and rejoice and give honour to him.

2. We learn that benevolence is an essential part of true religion. If the blessings which God bestows on us, are not for our sakes only, but for the sake of others, then we should apply them to the benefit of others, as well as our own. To the nature and intention of God's government we no farther conform, than we act with a regard to his name, in imitation of his goodness, and with a view to the happiness of our fellow creatures, in conjunction with our own. All injustice, avarice, ambition, cruelty, fraud and selfishness, are contrary to the design of God's government, and to the nature of pure religion. The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and he who in these things serveth Christ, is accepted of God, and approved of men.

3. We learn farther, that under all the adversities of life, we have reason to confide in God's care, and submit to his will.

withhold from u
rightly. All things are working
good. To know God's will, and
his sight should be our only solic
his favour, we have nothing
trust in him and do good, and r
to us. He careth for us; we m
upon him. He is a faithful Cre
may commit ourselves in well doi

4. We learn from our subject tl
ety of envy and discontent.

Do you envy the man who posse
tion of earthly good, than youself?
given him, not for his own sake,
general purpose. If he has a large
also a greater trust committed to
difficult part to act. There is more
and he will have a greater accoun
this an enviable situation? You
our, or his wealth. Do you wish t
tions to discharge, his duties to
counts to settle, when he shall cl
ship? No: But still you desire h

vantage is there in earthly things, but as they are means by which you may supply your real wants, relieve the miseries and promote the happiness of those around you, and provide for yourselves treasures unfailing in the heavens?

You look on the superiour condition of another, and are discontented with your own. But why discontented? The abundance given him is not for his sake only: It is for your sake also, if you need it, and Providence sees best that you should receive it. The riches of one are a benefit to many. If he has not that benevolence, which becomes his ability, yet heaven is wise and good. Things are so constituted, that even from the miser's fountain some involuntary streams will run, at which others may drink and be refreshed. Whatever the rich man's heart may be, the God who gave him riches is as kind to others as to him. This man is as really dependent on his fellow men, as the poorest of his neighbours, and can, no more than they, subsist without aid. The variety which we see in men's outward circumstances, is intended for general good. A perfect equality would be inconsistent with human happiness. It would put a stop to mutual succour and assistance; to the reciprocation of benefits. It would weaken the springs of industry, and check the spirit of enterprise and invention. It would tend to poverty, rudeness and misery. The bounties of Providence are dispensed with wisdom; and all, though possessed by the sons of men in different measures, tend to the general good. Every virtuous and industrious man draws from the common treasury a share according to his wants. The poor have this; the rich can have no more. Let every man study to be quiet, to do his own business, and to be content with such things as he has.

To conclude: How glorious will God's providential government appear, in the result, when all

things are ours. whether the w
death, or things present, or things
ours, for we are Christ's, and Chris
him be glory. Amen.

SERMON IV.

The work of Redemption marvellous, but divine.

MATTHEW xxi. 42.

This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

THE work here pronounced marvellous in the eyes of men, is the redemption of our fallen race by the Son of God, sent down from heaven, appearing in human flesh, dying on the cross, exalted afterward to glory, and exalting believers with him.

This work, faintly exhibited in prophecy, was a subject of admiration; displayed in the actual execution, it was a subject of higher admiration; but its final result in the salvation of believers, will raise to greater height, and spread to wider extent, the admiration of God's manifold wisdom and unsearchable grace.

However the Redeemer may be despised and rejected now, the day is coming, when he will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them who believe. The stone, which has been set at nought by the builders, is made, and will appear to have been made, the head of the corner. God has laid in Sion a chief corner stone, chosen and precious;

and the wisdom of God.

The scheme of salvation opened
who contemplate it, must acknowle
derful. And some have thought
great to be believed. "Mankind,'
an inconsiderable race of beings
lowest in the rational scale. God i
py and glorious in himself, and c
more or less so by the conduct or
his creatures. Can it then be th
would take all that concern for mer
pel represents him to have done; t
pity them in their guilt, as to sen
deemer, in a human form too, yea
condition of men—would subject
mous death, number him with tr
appoint him a grave with the wicl
terward raise him to heaven in this s
dy, and there place him at the head
to manage the affairs of it for the b
ers?—Is there in man any dignit
which deserves such a singular inter
not the means out of proportion to
we see any thing in the whole eco
dence at all resembling this?"

The examination of this matter will lead us to some profitable meditations, and prepare the way for some serious reflections.

1. The wonderfulness of the scheme of redemption, exhibited in the gospel, is a presumptive evidence of its divinity.

The farther it lies beyond the reach of human invention, the more reason is there to believe that it came from God. If it is quite a singular plan, and there is nothing in the whole system of nature that bears a resemblance to it, then there is nothing that could suggest it to the wit of men, or give a hint from which to frame it in the imagination; consequently it must be wholly the contrivance of divine wisdom, and the discovery of divine revelation.

That men are guilty and impotent, is obvious to experience. This has ever been their acknowledgment and complaint. To inform them of this unhappy state, they have not needed revelation. How they may be recovered, is a natural inquiry. But, Could it, without any intimation, have entered into the heart of man, to imagine such a scheme as the gospel lays before us?—If any had been disposed to frame a scheme for the amusement, or deception of their fellow creatures, Could they possibly have conceived so great, so singular a scheme as the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of the Son of God? Man is indeed an inventive creature; but his invention appears rather in improving on suggestions already made, than in originating things entirely new. The greatest discoveries, which have been made in arts and sciences, are the fruits of some fortunate accident, from which a hint was first taken, and afterward ripened by experiment. But as there could be nothing in nature to suggest the idea of the death of the Son of God for the sins of men, so it is absurd to suppose it a

The provision made for our
tion, might as well be said to b
the end, as that which is made
ness; for there is at least as m
ends, as there is in the means.

If we consider man in relatio
What is he? He is born, g
drinks, labours and sleeps, pro
sor, and soon retires to be seen
Yet behold what God has done
spacious world for his habitatio
of animals subjected to his domi
kindled up in the heavens to e
him; a vast firmament stretc
and thousands of luminaries scat
his comfort and convenience; t
their treasures, and the sun emi
tify the earth for his support. I
such mighty preparation should
considerable and transient a c
Strange it would seem indeed, i
ed with his life. But we see, t
for him. Other purposes may r

visitest him? For thou hast made him little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour; thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet, the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea. O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

This vast preparation for so small and unworthy a creature, the Psalmist considers, not as an objection against the wisdom of Providence, but as an evidence of its boundless goodness.

Now if God has done all this to accommodate man, during the present short term of his existence, Is it incredible that he should do much more for his happiness in the future, eternal state of existence? Is the work of redemption more disproportioned to man's importance, as an immortal creature, than the works of providence seem to be, when we consider him only as a mortal creature? The works both of providence and of grace, are marvellous. When we trace them, we meet wonders, which astonish us. But let us remember, they are the works of God. While we admire the works, let us adore the author and rejoice in his wisdom and goodness.

3. Though man considered in relation to this world, may seem but a contemptible creature, yet, considered in relation to another world, he is a creature of vast importance.

Let us contemplate him in this light, and surely it will not appear strange, that a God of infinite wisdom and benevolence should do great things for his redemption.

Here is a creature formed by God's own hand, inspired with his breath, and endued by him with an intellectual mind. This mind, made for immortality, is capable of continual improvement through all the ages of eternity. Though this creature is

ed to him.

If one rational and immortal soul
What shall we say of the human
When we view men as mortal, t
diminutive figure; but this mortali
to lessen the importance of the indiv
the importance of the race; beca
multiplied by this quick succession.
the vast number, which composes o
consider how soon one generation pa
another comes—reflect how many s
must already have passed—look for
how many more will follow in the
that the world will continue—realiz
beings will exist forever in happine
that eternal misery is the natural con
curable vice, and that happiness can
a holy and virtuous temper—con
things, and then say, Whether th
mankind was a business too small to
by the Son of God?—Is not the en
plished so amazingly great, that w

eternity in happiness or misery; and consider also, that there are innumerable millions of such creatures, and will be innumerable more of the same kind, and in the same condition; then our views must be altered. It can no longer seem a thing incredible, that God should redeem the world by his Son.

4. We know not but the human race is essentially connected with other parts of the moral world; and their redemption productive of interesting consequences to other beings. And doubtless it is so.

In that part of the creation which falls within our notice, we see a dependence of one thing upon another. If one part was struck out, confusion would immediately follow. We see an easy gradation from the lower creatures to higher, until we come up to man. We are told, that, above man, there are intelligent beings, and that among these there are orders and degrees. The gradation may probably be continued beyond all our conceptions. However we may view the human race, when we consider it by itself, yet if we consider it in its relation to other beings, and to the creation of God, we must think it to be of infinite importance. Should this link, in the chain of God's works, be broken, the whole order of the system might be destroyed.

God certainly had some wise and great end in making such a race: The preservation of the race, when made, and the redemption of it, when fallen, might, in the plan of God's government, be as necessary as its creation.

We are assured from scripture, that the redemption, though it immediately relates to man, is a work in which other intelligences have some concern. Our great Redeemer has all power given him in heaven and earth; principalities and powers are made subject to him; the multitude of the heavenly host rejoiced and sang praise at his birth; an-

who was slain. The work of re
more important than we are apt to
we consider it only in relation
Though it primarily relates to us,
son to believe, that it is adapted
great purposes in the moral world
know how many and how great th
let us not pretend to say, The mea
or disproportioned to the end. W
to another state, new scenes will op
of divine wisdom and goodnes
Then we shall see and admire that
works of God, which now lies beyo

5. When we consider the w
should remember what a being he

Does it seem strange, that s
should do so much for so small a c
To an Infinite Being all things are
the exercises of his power will alw
his perfect wisdom. But how
will judge, we can no more deter
comprehend what infinite power

When we consider the greatness of God, we must remember, that goodness belongs to greatness. In the contemplation of human greatness, we often leave out the idea of goodness, because we see that the thing itself is often wanting. Men of great wealth and power despise those who are placed below them. If we see much condescension joined with earthly dignity, we admire it as something rare. But these partial conceptions of greatness we must not apply to the Diety. Goodness is his glory, and the exercise of it is his delight.

That man is unworthy of such a work as has been done for him, is undeniable; yea, he is unworthy of the daily bounties of Providence. But if the goodness of God is equal to the work, then we may believe, that it has been done. As God is an infinite and allperfect being, his goodness must exceed all our thoughts. However our guilt may abound, his grace much more abounds.

We see and know that God has made kind provision for our present support:—May we not from hence reasonably hope, that he has done more for our future happiness? We feel that we are weak, and need the care of his Providence, and we perceive that we enjoy it. We are conscious too, that we are guilty, and dependent on his grace:—May we not hope for *this?* The gospel tells us, that he has sent his Son to redeem and save us, and given his spirit to sanctify and preserve us:—Is it not a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation? We are sinners, but still God loads us with his benefits:—May not his daily bounty encourage our hope in his everlasting mercy? We cannot have too humble thoughts of ourselves, nor can we have too exalted thoughts of God.

If he had never revealed his mercy to save us, we could never have been assured how he would deal with us. Mercy is free; it may do for sinners more or less, as wisdom shall direct. The hopes

ce and joy. It is the Lord's doing ; l
arvellous in our eyes.

How great soever the work of redemptior
it too great for perfect wisdom to contrive,
is mercy to adopt, and infinite power to e
an, however small, is the creature of Go
nal and immortal creature ; and his ra
numerable multitude. God, whose goodr
nds to the brutal tribes, which exist bu
ys, may well be supposed to regard such
the human, created to exist forever.
e race to be important ; and, in its cor
ith other beings, it may be vastly more im
an we can conceive ; and the work of r
on, though it immediately relates to man, r
ver other grand purposes in God's moral
ent. The works of grace then, though
us beyond conception, are rational and cre
tional, as suited to the wants of man, and
le to the goodness of God—credible, as r
his word, and attested by signs and wonde
ifts of the Holy Ghost.

It becomes us then seriously to contempl
evoutly to admire these works of God ; a
ankfulness and joy to take the benefit of the

SERMON V.

The work of Redemption marvellous, but divine.

MATTHEW xxi. 42.

This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

AMONG all the works of God which have come to our knowledge, the redemption of fallen men by Jesus Christ, is by far the most marvellous. Into this the angels desire to look, and from this they learn the manifold wisdom of God.

When we behold the glorious Creator and Governour of the universe, giving his own Son to death, that through him we might live—when we behold this divine Saviour compassed with our infirmities, bearing our sorrows, and dying in our cause—when we behold him, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory, and bringing many to glory with him—we cannot but say, *This is marvellous in our eyes.*

In the contemplation of this work, some have thought it too marvellous to be believed, and have made the greatness of it an objection against its credibility.

This objection we have examined; and our examination, while it removes the objection, and confirms our faith in the great and admirable plan of the gospel, suggests to our minds various useful and important reflections.

1. The scheme of our redemption is a subject worthy of our frequent contemplation.

The scheme is wonderful; the more we view it, the more wonderful it appears; and the more wonderful, the more evidently divine; and if it is divine, it demands our attention and regard.

A design so grand in itself, so graciously adapted to human weaknesses and wants, and so clearly manifesting the glories of the Divine Character, will acknowledge no author less than God. All the works of the Lord are great, sought out by them who have pleasure in them. *This* work is peculiarly honourable and glorious. In this he appears gracious and full of compassion. In this he has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. Let this be forever remembered.

with ourselves. The reason why many think of it so seldom, or so indifferently, and discern in it so little wisdom and grace, is their ignorance of their own character, and their insensibility of their own condition. Christ came to seek and to save them who are lost. Had not men been lost, they would have needed no redemption. Until they feel themselves lost they will not value nor accept redemption. To them, who realize their ruined and helpless state, a Saviour will be precious.

Humility is a necessary preparative for the kingdom of God. The knowledge of ourselves is the ground work of humility. Convinced that we are guilty before God, and condemned by his justice; that we can make no satisfaction to his justice, nor resistance to his power, we shall adore his wisdom and grace in giving a Saviour for us, and laying our help on one, who is mighty to save; we shall admire the compassion of the Saviour in bearing our sins on the cross, that we might live through him; we shall rejoice, that he was delivered for our offences and raised for our justification; that he is gone into heaven to prepare a place for us, and has sent down his spirit to prepare us for a place with himself.

Men's different apprehensions of the gospel scheme, are chiefly owing to their different views of themselves. The self confident and careless sinner will not submit to it, for he feels no need of it, and sees no excellency in it. The convinced and humbled sinner, realizing his own impotence and unworthiness, admires the salvation of the gospel, and earnestly desires to become a sharer in it. To him the invitations, calls and promises of the gospel, come with peculiar acceptableness.

That we may be better prepared for meditation on this marvellous work of God, we must be conversant with ourselves, search our hearts, try our

ways, know our guilt, and learn our weaknes
The weary, the hungry, the thirsty, the poor a
the sick, are called to the Saviour, that they may r
ceive relief, comforts and supplies. They wl
fancy themselves to be full, and in want of nothin
will despise the call: To men of an opposite cha
acter it will come as tidings of great joy.

2. Our subject opens to us most glorious and a
tonishing prospects.

What a marvellous work God has wrought for t
redemption of men! The end was certainly worth
of the means. The redemption then contains in
something far beyond all our conceptions. Ho
vast must be that happiness, which was purchase
by the death of the Son of God! It must be mor
than eye hath seen, or ear hath heard, or huma
heart conceived.

Our worldly prospects are low, confined and pr
carious. This life is short; the good which t

in the presence of God and the Redeemer—as there continually to grow in knowledge, improve in virtue, rise in dignity, and advance in glory and happiness, through endless ages—as, by and by, to become equal to angels, and, in the remoter periods of your existence, to be raised above the present perfection of angels—view yourselves in this light, and, Will you not be transported with the prospect before you?—Will you not feel yourselves already on the wing, and elevated far above this earth?—Will you not, from this exalted height, look down with indifference on all the little and lessening glories of the world; and, like the eagle, with strong and steady pinion, bear through this terrestrial atmosphere, full on the sun; rising, and rising, until you reach that glorious rest, which awaits you in yonder world?

3. What a firm and immoveable foundation has the Christian for his faith and hope!

When we consider ourselves as guilty, and the Almighty God as perfectly just and holy, we tremble in his presence. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, Who can stand? If thou shouldst contend with us, we cannot answer thee. When our iniquities take hold on us, How shall we look up?—But we will turn our eyes to the work of redemption. Here we see, that God is gracious and merciful, as well as holy and righteous. Here we see pardon and life purchased by the blood of his Son, for fallen and guilty men. There is forgiveness with him. We will wait for the Lord, and in his word we will hope, for with him is mercy and plenteous redemption. He will redeem us from all our iniquities. He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, How shall he not with him also freely give us all things? He who has sent his only begotten Son, that we might live

rough him, will give eternal life to as many as be-
ve in him. His mercy is unto all, and upon all
no believe in Jesus, and there is no difference.
e cannot imagine, that the all wise and unchange-
le God, who, for the salvation of sinners, has
rformed a work, marvellous in the eyes of all ho-
beings, will drop his great design, throw aside
that he has done, and leave repenting, hoping
nners, to perish. We cannot imagine, that the
od, who has displayed such astonishing mercy in
ying the ground work of our happiness, will frus-
ate the humble expectations of those, who build
this foundation. Thus reasons the Apostle :—
God commended his love toward us, in that, while
e were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much
ore, then, being now justified by his blood, we
all be saved from wrath by him. For if, when
e were enemies, we were reconciled to God by
e death of his Son, much more, being reconcil-
, we shall be saved by his life." Impressed with

a demonstration of the contrariety of sin to the will of God, and to the design of his moral government?—We can think of nothing—Had it not been opposite to the nature of God, inconsistent with the happiness of man, and destructive of the beauty and order of the rational world, Can we suppose, any thing like this would have been done?

If you think lightly of sin, look to Jesus suffering on the cross to expiate your guilt, and be convinced of your mistake.

If sin is of such a detestable nature, and ruinous tendency, then entertain not the hope of salvation without repentance.

The gospel tells us, *God would not that any should perish.* At the same time, it tells us, *He would that all should come to repentance.* Without repentance, there can be no salvation. *Christ bare our sins in his own body on the cross, that we, being dead to sin, should live to righteousness.* He shed his blood, *that he might redeem us from our vain conversation.* He gave himself for us, *that he might purify us to himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* He came *to call sinners to repentance*, and thus to *save them who are lost.* The gospel displays the purity, as well as the mercy of God; and, while it brings us the hope of pardon, it shews the necessity of a renovation of our nature. Christ died to deliver us from the wrath to come; but he delivers us from wrath only in a way of holiness. Notwithstanding all that has been done, still cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience.

5. We are taught our obligation to universal benevolence.

The gospel is a plan of benevolence. Here we see the independent Creator exercising his compassion to fallen creatures. Here we see the Saviour coming down from heaven, to accomplish, by his labours and sufferings, the wonderful design which

ness and love;
adapted to teach us our obligation
with a disposition, to do good, a
tunity.

Whoever really falls in with the
of that spirit of benevolence, whi
and inculcates. The man of an en
haughty, unforgiving temper, wh
may profess, is, in heart, an enemy
Christ. To receive the gospel, i
genius and spirit of it, which is lov
That regeneration, which is our pr
happiness revealed, is a transforma
into the temper required in the gosp
temper, an eminent and distinguish
"Be ready," says the Apostle, "
work; speak evil of no man; be
all meekness to all men. For we
foolish, disobedient, living in ma
hateful, and hating one another; bu
ness and love of God our Saviour t
peared, he, according to his merc
the washing of regeneration, and b
of the Holy Ghost.—Thus we are
cording to the hope of eternal life.

ɔrding to the mercy of God, who through Jesus
ɾist hath shed forth his spirit abundantly. By
; change we become heirs according to the hope
ɛternal life. They who have seen such an ex-
ɔle of love in the Saviour of the world, and have
the power of his love on their own hearts, will
on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kind-
s, humbleness of mind, meekness and longsuffer-
. They will rejoice in the happiness, and sym-
ɲize in the miseries of their fellow creatures.
ey will look with concern on stubborn sinners,
ɔ appear to be hastening their own destruction,
:ontempt of all the grace of the gospel. They
l wish the universal spread of true religion, and
ɔice in the hope of its future power and preva-
ce among the nations of the earth. They will
y for all men, knowing, that this is acceptable in
sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men
ɔe saved, and come to the knowledge of the
th.

If the benevolence of the gospel inspires our
ɪrts, we shall not only desire and pray that others
y share with us in its blessings, but endeavour,
hin our sphere, to promote its influence. We
ll openly profess it before men, and, by a con-
ɾsation agreeable to it, shall recommend it to all
ɔund us. We shall encourage an attendance on
institutions, not forsaking the assembling of our-
ves together, but considering one another, to
ɔvoke unto love and good works. We shall re-
ɾd, with particular attention, the young who are
ɪced under our care; shall lead their tender minds
some just apprehensions of the gospel; shall in-
lcate on them the tempers and duties which it en-
ns, and aid their preparation for that glorious state
ɪich it reveals; and great will be our joy, when
: see them walking in the truth.

Did the kind and friendly spirit of the gospel gen-
rally prevail, how greatly would it diminish the
niseries, and advance the happiness of the world!
t is the nature of true religion to make men happy.
s work is peace, and its effect is quietness and as-
urance forever.

6. Awful is the danger of those who reject the
ospel.

A way of salvation so marvellous, as this, which
ne gospel reveals, we may be assured is the only
ay. They who refuse it, must perish; and mar-
ellous will be their destruction. Hear the Apos-
le's warning to the contemptuous, unbelieving
ews:—"Know ye, that through Jesus Christ is
reached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by him,
ll who believe, are justified from all things, from
hich they could not be justified by the law of Mo-
es." Beware therefore lest that come upon you,
hich is spoken of in the prophets:—"*Behold, ye
espisers, and wonder, and perish.*"—Ye shall perish

judice, or an implicit confidence in false leaders, ll stumble at the gospel, will be grievously unded by his fall, and unless he recovers himself, l finally perish. "But on whomsoever this stone ll fall," after its elevation in the building, as ven- nce will hereafter fall, with accumulated weight, those who continue in unbelief, "it shall grind ı to powder." Christ, you see, here makes a inction between different kinds of sinners; be- en those who stumble at the stone, and those o despise and reject it. And he makes an answer- e distinction in the punishment: The former wounded by their fall; the latter are ground to vder. There are some heedless, inattentive crea- es, who walk on in the way in which they chance oe led, and seldom consider whither they are go- ; or where their course will end. These are e men, who stumble at the stone. There are ers, who hate the truth, and will not come to it; o despise the gospel, and labour to infuse their n prejudices into the minds of others. These the mad builders, who push away the chief cor- stone and set it at nought. The former will meet unishment proportionable to their guilt: On the er, wrath will come to the uttermost. The stone, ich in contempt, they roll aside, will fall back on them, and crush them into ruins. Awful will the doom of the careless—more so that of the owed enemies of truth. Since God has wrought great a work for the salvation of guilty men, to m who neglect this salvation there can be no es- oe. But a still sorer punishment awaits those o tread under foot the Son of God. To them o sin wilfully, after they have received the knowl- ge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacri- e for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment, l fiery indignation, which shall devour the adver- ies.

ing—the Spirit of Grace is strivi
your probation is hastening to a cl
this your day, the things which
peace, before they are hidden from

Marvellous is the work which Je
you.—Let it not be said of you, a
contemptuous Jews—He marvell
their unbelief.

SERMON VI.

Shepherds glorifying God for the Birth of a Saviour.

A COMMUNION SERMON.

LUKE ii. 20.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

THE birth of Jesus Christ was attended with circumstances of solemn majesty and grandeur, as well as of singular poverty and meanness. His parents were in a low condition, but of royal descent. The place of his birth was a small village, but worthy of notice in ancient prophecy. The apartment was a stable, but attended by angels. The first who received intelligence of his birth, were shepherds in the field; but the heralds, who announced the event, were a multitude of the heavenly host.

Just before the Saviour's birth, an order from the Roman Emperour, that the whole empire should be numbered and enrolled, obliged all the people to repair to their respective cities. Joseph and Mary, the parents of Jesus, being of the lineage of David,

ent, on this occasion, to Bethlehem, which is call-
the city of David. So great was the concourse
people, that persons, in the poor condition of
is happy pair, could find no accommodation in
blick houses. They were therefore compelled
seek a shelter in a stable. Here was born that
orious person, who was to redeem a guilty world.
In the neighbouring country, were shepherds at-
nding their flocks: While in their turns they kept
e watches of the night, they were suddenly sur-
ised with a light which blazed around them, and
e presence of a superior being standing near them.
The heavenly messenger soon calmed their fears.
ehold, says he, *I bring you good tidings of great*
y, which shall be to all people; for unto you is
rn, this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who
Christ the Lord. And this is the sign by which
shall know him, He is wrapt in swaddling clothes,
d lies in a manger.
Scarcely had he delivered his message, when he

hat this was the promised Messiah. They returned, publishing the joyful news, and glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen.

We will contemplate *the things* for which, and he *manner* in which, they glorified God, and will ntermingle some practical reflections.

I. We will consider the matters for which they glorified and praised God. These were *the things, which they had heard and seen.*

1. They glorified God, that the promised Saviour was now *born.*

They seem to have been some of those pious people, who looked for redemption in Israel. In their rural occupation they enjoyed leisure for spiritual contemplation, and for converse with the book of prophecy. Hence they learned, that a Redeemer was promised to Israel and to the world. Free from that pride and ambition, which possessed the minds of the opulent and great men of the nation, they formed more just ideas of the design and manner of his appearance. That he should be born in such humble circumstances, shocked not their aith, for they were looking, not for temporal grandur, but for spiritual salvation.

Worldly affections are opposite to the genius of hrist's religion. *How can ye believe,* says he to e Pharisees, *who receive honour one of another, nd seek not the honour which cometh only from od?* They who receive Christ as their Redeemer nd Lord, must crucify the flesh, and renounce the orld. The simple manners and humble views of he shepherds, were better suited to the spirit of the ospel, than the prospects and refinements of the reat.

2. They rejoiced that this Saviour was born *for them.* The angel says, UNTO YOU *is born this day a Saviour.*

Conscious of their impotence and unworthiness,

ey felt their need of a Saviour, and esteemed it
tter of great joy, that he was come to bring sal-
tion to them.

They doubtless admired the distinguishing grace
God, in visiting them first of all with the glori-
s tidings. While the rich and great were passed
, humble shepherds were regarded. Not many
ghty, not many noble, are called. Things which
e hidden from the wise, are revealed to babes.
ne pride and parade of courts, are the contempt
angels; but the cottage of the shepherd is hon-
red with their presence. Let no man repine at
e meanness of his own condition, or envy the su-
riour circumstances of another. God dwells with
mble souls. He has chosen the poor in this
orld, rich in faith, to be heirs of his kingdom.
e fills the hungry with good things, but the rich
sends empty away.

How joyous the message to these humble swains,
Saviour is born to you! Every penitent soul may

I bring you good tidings, says the angel, *which shall be to* ALL PEOPLE. The heavenly host subjoin, *Peace on earth, good will to men.* When the good man looks around, he sees the world lying in wickedness. In the hours of serious contemplation, he feels a painful solicitude for his fellow mortals. He considers, that they, as well as he, are soon to quit this transitory scene, and enter on a state of everlasting retribution. He is deeply affected with the thought of that dreadful end, to which multitudes, with little concern for themselves, appear to be hastening. It is, however, a joyful consideration, that a Saviour has been born, and has lived and died for mankind, and that the benefits of his death are of extensive design; that through him pardon is offered without distinction of nation, age or character; through faith of him, the mercy of God is unto all, and upon all who believe, and there is no difference. While he laments that so many nations of the earth are strangers to the Saviour, and among those who have heard of him, so many live regardless of him, he rejoices in the persuasion, that a time is coming, when salvation shall be proclaimed through the world, and meet with general acceptance among a fallen race. In the mean time, he is solicitous to work out his own salvation, and by his example and conversation, to awaken to so important an object, the attention of all around him. By his daily prayers he implores divine grace for those at a distance, whom he has never seen; for his country; for the church of God; for all mankind in the present, and in succeeding ages.

4. The shepherds glorified God for what they had *seen*, as well as what they had heard.

They had seen the Saviour—seen him in the very place and condition in which the angel had described him. They had seen full evidence, that this was indeed the promised Messiah. They had

een in him the accomplishment of the ancient rophecies, which foretold, that he should be born f a virgin, of the lineage of David, in the city of ethlehem, and in an obscure condition; should row up as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry round. The manner of his birth, and the circumtances which preceded it, they doubtless learned n conversation with Joseph and Mary. When they aw the predictions of scripture, and the informaion of the angel, so exactly verified, they could no onger doubt but this must be the Saviour, who was ome to accomplish the great and good things foreold of him.

Happy were they, that they should live in a time, hen the Saviour was born, in a place near the city, hich was honoured with his birth—that they should e notified by angels concerning this glorious event —that they should have an opportunity to behold im, pay their honours to him, see the prophecies ulfilled in him, and confirm their faith, by a sight

him in the flesh, but his gospel is come to us, in a manner, under circumstances, and with characters, which prove it divine. We have as full evidence for the ground of our faith, as they who lived when Jesus was on earth—much fuller evidence than those shepherds who had only seen him in his infant state. If they, on the first notice of his birth, so readily sought him, and believed in him, How inexcusable are we to reject the great salvation, which began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed by the testimony of those who heard him, by the signs and wonders which were wrought in his name, and by the completion of a series of prophecies uttered from his own mouth and the mouth of his Apostles? If, after all the light which we have received, we reject this Saviour, disbelieve his gospel, and despise the salvation purchased with his blood, we make God a liar, and judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life.

2. They glorified God by a *ready obedience.*

Being informed by a heavenly messenger, where the Saviour lay, *they came to him with haste.* They made no delay, but immediately obeyed the divine intimation.

Faith operates in a way of cheerful obedience. If these shepherds had refused to repair to Bethlehem, would you have thought that they believed the tidings sent them?—If the care of their flocks had now detained them from the Saviour, would you have imagined that they regarded him more than these?—The faith which produces no obedience, is unprofitable and vain. How many practically deny the Saviour whom they profess to honour! You say, you believe that the Son of God has come into the world, been manifested in our flesh, died on the cross, risen from the dead, and ascended to heaven; that he is able to save to the uttermost, and that there is salvation in no other.

3. They glorified God by *con*
ing the Saviour's name. "Wh
him, they made known abroad w
them concerning the child."

They were not ashamed to ow
siah, even in his infant state. T
see what would be the current o
fessed him early; they were the
edged him in his high character.

You see, that true faith will pr
our Christ before men. Do yo
came to save a lost world, and sti
or neglect to confess him in this c
cate yourself to him, and to atter
—Where is your consistency
to profess your faith in him, b
in a different practice? Do y
what they will do?—Are you re
prehension of contempt? Where
These humble, honest shepherd
example: They only waited fo
their faith. They would not cor
ly, nor fully rely on the word of
first sought the token, by which t
mation was to be verified; and wh

This shall be a sign to you, Ye shall find the babe wrapt in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.—And they came with haste, and found as he had told them.

God gave them a particular sign for the confirmation of their faith; and he has appointed standing means to strengthen and enliven ours. Jesus Christ is exhibited to us in his word, in his sanctuary, and at his table. Here we are to seek him, and converse with him, that we may increase our faith and warm our love. Had the shepherds refused to see the newborn Saviour in Bethlehem, and to accept the offered confirmation of the angel's word, What would you have thought of them?—Would not such a conduct have been marked with ingratitude, unbelief and contempt?—Will you neglect the more easy means of awakening into exercise, your faith in, and love to, the crucified and ascended Saviour? Shall his gospel lie by you unread and unregarded?—Shall the doors of his house in vain be thrown open for you to enter?—Shall his table, from time to time, be spread, and this King of Glory take his seat there, and will you turn away your faces, and retire with cold indifference? How unlike are you to these pious swains! Would you have ran with them from a neighbouring field to Bethlehem, to see your Redeemer in his manger, wrapt in his infant robes? And, Will you not come to his table to behold him dressed in all the bright ornaments of grace and love—to behold him offering himself a sacrifice to God for your salvation, and stretching forth the arms of his mercy to invite you to his affectionate embraces? The same faith and love, which winged the feet of the shepherds on their way to Bethlehem, would waft you to the house, where Jesus has appointed to meet you, and place you down at the altar, where he exhibits himself crucified for you.

gratitude, admiration and praise.
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When you have beheld the Lo
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above all things, should be welcome to guilty mortals, What think you ?—Are they not astonished to see our ingratitude and indifference ?—To see in a Christian land the number of professing Christians so small ?—To see the assemblies in Christ's house so thin ?—To see so few gathering round his table ?—To hear our songs of praise to the Redeemer rise with so partial, and so faint a sound ? If mere benevolence so deeply interested them in this great event, What must they think, when they see us, whose eternal salvation depends upon it, so indifferent to it—so negligent to secure to ourselves its infinite and everlasting benefits ? Shall the air ring with angelick praises for man's redemption, and earth not catch the sound ?—The shepherds in the field heard the voice, and felt the devotion—Shall we, under advantages for superior knowledge and stronger faith, be dead to all sense of gratitude ?—Shall we never learn the song of those who are redeemed from the earth ?—Shall the fields and cottages of Israel's shepherds be more vocal in the Redeemer's praise, than the churches of Christians ?

How pleasing to saints and angels ; to the Redeemer and the Father of men, will be the sight, when sinners, with one heart, shall repair to the throne of grace, and humbly seek an interest in the salvation of the gospel ; when the churches shall be thronged with devout and attentive worshippers, and the table of the Lord surrounded with thankful and admiring guests ?—There is joy in the presence of the angels, when sinners repent : The Redeemer is satisfied when, in their conversion, he sees the travail of his soul : God is pleased, when they bow to the authority of his son, and he hears, with approbation, the songs in which they celebrate redeeming love.

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive blessing and honour and power ; for he hath redeemed us to God by his blood. To him be glory in the church, throughout all ages—Amen.

John leaning on Jesus's

A COMMUNION SE

JOHN xiii. 23.

Now there was leaning on Jesus's bosom one Jesus loved.

OUR blessed Lord, hav
ed his work on earth, and knowin
his death was just at hand, expres
sire to celebrate the passover once
disciples. Preparation being ma
his instructions, he sat down with
This precious season he employed
as was adapted to their present

caution. When he had washed their feet, he said, *Now ye are clean, but not all.* An intimation this, that there was among them one who was not clean, and who had no part in him. He had reference to the traitor; but the disciples did not fully comprehend his meaning. He therefore, a little after, speaks more plainly. *If ye know these things,* which I have done, *happy are ye, if ye do them. I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen: But that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me, hath lift up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.* This premonition put them on thinking. But that one of his own family should join his enemies, seemed so incredible, that they scarcely yet understood him. While he dwelt on the melancholy subject, his spirit was greatly troubled: But painful as it was, he at length speaks out the matter fully—*Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.* Struck dumb with horror, *the disciples* sat, and *looked on one another, doubting of whom he spake.*

Now there was leaning on Jesus's bosom one of his disciples, whom he loved. This, as we learn from the last chapter in this gospel, was John himself. He is often called *the beloved disciple.* At supper he sat next to Jesus, and reclined on his bosom. Peter, seeing John in this attitude, beckoned to him, that he should ask Jesus, which was the disciple of whom he spake. John then lying on Jesus's breast, says to him, probably in a low voice, *Lord, Who is it?* Jesus, in the same manner, answered, *It is he, to whom I shall give the sop, when I have dipped it.*—And *he dipped the sop and gave it to Judas.* That this conversation between Jesus and John was unheard by the other disciples, is evident; for they knew not that Judas was the traitor, until afterward, when Jesus pointed him out by his dipping his hand with him in the dish.

And happy the disciple, who, a
by faith and love, lean on the bre
er.

1. Christ, by admitting this d
his bosom, shewed a *special* and
for him.

It is observed in the text, that
his breast, was the one *whom he*
the others; but this he loved wit
tion. In the temper and behavio
was something which recomme
Lord's particular esteem, and e
endearing appellation, *the disciple*

The writings of this Apostle
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fidelity in duty, pointed him out
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rated so powerfully in his own breast, he wished to see transfused through the hearts of all.

As he was distinguished by a kind and friendly disposition, so he shared largely in the love of Christ, and was admitted to special intimacy with him. He was one of the three disciples, who accompanied Jesus, when he went to heal the ruler's daughter—when he ascended into the mountain to display the glory of his transfiguration—when he retired to the garden for prayer, just before his crucifixion. This was the disciple to whom he, on the cross, committed the care of his aged mother. He placed particular confidence in John, as one who would faithfully execute the tender charge.

Every sincere Christian is an object of the Redeemer's love. But some are admitted nearer to him than others. His love is not, like human affection, arbitrary and capricious; it is guided by a clear discernment of the comparative degrees of holiness in his different disciples. As the graces of religion, especially the more amiable graces of humility, meekness, condescension, constancy, fidelity and benevolence, abound in them, they share more largely in his approbation and regard. We are often attached to persons by things foreign to their character; by the comeliness of their form, the dignity of their station, the politeness of their manners, the brilliancy of their wit, the pleasantness of their natural temper, or the elegance of their dress and appearance. But these are circumstances on which the love of Christ will never turn. It is real virtue and righteousness, rectitude of heart, and purity of life, which entitle us to his esteem. The more we have of that mind which was in him, the greater and stronger interest have we in his friendship and regard.

John was highly honoured in being the disciple whom Jesus loved. But let us remember, that the same temper which was so pleasing to Jesus in this

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have made known unto you. T
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John enjoyed a peculiar intimac
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and reclined on his bosom: An
his Lord, he enjoyed a converse
to his brethren.

When Christ testified to the

ples. John was the first who knew Judas to be the traitor—the first who was relieved from the torturing anxiety, lest he himself were the unhappy man. When Christ had given Judas the sop, he said to him. *What thou dost, do quickly.* To what intent he spake this, none at the table knew, except John. Some of them thought, that, because Judas had the bag, Christ meant that he should go and buy the things which were necessary for the seven ensuing days of the feast; or that he should give something to the poor, as was customary at the time of the passover. As Christ's general premonition had pointed out no particular person, they were exceeding sorrowful, and began, each for himself, to inquire, *Lord, Is it I?—Lord, Is it I?* Jesus now distinguishes the traitor. Judas's hand was in the same dish, out of which Jesus was eating: At this instant Christ says, *It is he, who is dipping his hand with me in the dish.* This was the first sign, by which they knew who should betray their Lord. John only knew this before, by the token of the sop.

We see, that Christ's beloved disciples enjoy the privilege of intimate communion with him. All sincere Christians have this privilege; but some have it in a more sensible manner than others. John, in this respect, was privileged above his brethren. The greater is our love and fidelity to Christ, the nearer access may we find. How happy is the devout, humble, fervent Christian! Whatever are his burdens, he may lean on Christ's bosom—may whisper to him his inward sorrows and secret desires, and may receive from him kind and seasonable answers, in a manner unobserved by others. This intimacy with the Saviour depends much on our likeness to him. If we have in us that temper of love and goodness, humility and meekness, devotion and heavenliness, which was in him, we shall know where to find him—we may come even to his

is love to Christ will express itself in obedi-
o his commands—in an imitation of his exam-
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John's posture at supper, bespoke *a grief of* under the apprehension of approaching trials. ing on the bosom of a friend, is an attitude ssive of *sorrow* and *languishment*.

us had often warned his disciples, that he must death at Jerusalem. As the time drew near, arnings were more frequent and explicit. He ust intimated to them, that this was the last

the heavens, he bends down his
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3. John, by leaning on Jesus's
his love to his Saviour. He chos
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choice of his doctrines

This love to Christ will express itself in obedience to his commands—in an imitation of his example—in doing good to his friends—in acknowledgments of his love—in promoting the interest of his kingdom—in frequent converse with him—and especially in a ready attendance on those ordinances, which are the appointed means of communion with him. It was at the ordinance of the passover, which immediately preceded the institution of the supper, that John was seen leaning on his Saviour. The paschal supper prefigured, and the sacramental supper commemorates, the death of Christ. They both had the same general design, with this difference only; one looked forward to a future event, the other respects that event already past. The gospel supper is appointed in remembrace of Christ's dying love. The Christian, under the influence of love to his Saviour, delights to attend on this institution, that he may have a more lively view of this once suffering, and now exalted friend—may stir up in his heart warmer affections to him, and more firmly fix his resolutions of obedience.

A careless neglect of so kind an institution, indicates a heart dead to pious and grateful sentiments. True love may indeed be attended with such self-distrust, as will deter some timorous and tender minds from this ordinance. But a careless neglect of, and habitual indifference to this gracious and dying institution of Christ, proves the intire want of love to him.

4. John's posture at supper, bespoke *a grief of heart* under the apprehension of approaching trials. Leaning on the bosom of a friend, is an attitude expressive of *sorrow* and *languishment*.

Jesus had often warned his disciples, that he must suffer death at Jerusalem. As the time drew near, his warnings were more frequent and explicit. He had just intimated to them, that this was the last

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he reflects, "Jesus was wounded
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my sins, in his own body, on th
his stripes I might be healed." T
of Christ's death, awakens in him

5. John's leaning on Christ's bosom, expressed *faith* and *confidence* in him. Leaning on another is a posture of reliance. The bride, in the Canticles, is described, as *coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved.*

This was a time of great anxiety and distress. The disciples were soon to see their Lord in the hands of his enemies. But John gives not up his hope. Still he rests on his Saviour's arm, casts his burden on him, and trusts that he will sustain him.

Here is the Chritians's refuge. Pressed with affliction, conscious of weakness, burdened with a sense of guilt, he repairs to the Saviour for pardon, consolation and support. In the sufferings of Christ, he sees the great evil of sin, and sees also ground of hope. The same blood, which displays the wrath of God against sinners, manifests also the mercy of God to pardon the believer. While he beholds the suffering Saviour, he reflects—*If these things were done in the Green tree, What will be done in the dry?* But at the same time, his soul gathers hope and confidence from this thought—*He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?—Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ who died.* He glories in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in the flesh.

6. The particular *time*, when John leaned on Jesus's bosom, deserves to be remarked. It was while he was sitting with him, *at the paschal supper.*

His attendance with him, at this solemnity, awakened those sentiments of love, faith, gratitude and hope, which he expressed by leaning on his breast.

While he looked back to that great national salvation, which was represented in the passover, we may suppose, his thoughts reached forward to the

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Such exercises were certainly
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soul. While we sit by him, let
him, confess to him our sins, lame

humble sense of our sins, and of the imperfection of our best works, let us lean on his bosom; for in him we have righteousness and strength. By thus leaning on him, let us gain a more familiar acquaintance with him, and grow in our preparation to be received into his bosom in heaven, and to eat bread with him in the kingdom of his Father.

The Spectators of the Crucifi
Breasts.

A COMMUNION S

LUKE xxiii. 48.

And all the people, that came together to
things which were done, smote their br

HOW exceedingly ch
affections and sentiments of the
to Jesus of Nazareth! In the c
try, they had expressed the high
They had followed him to the r
the country, to hear his doctrines
When he entered into Jerusalem

stroy him, and were instant with loud voices to have him crucified. When the governour declared him innocent, and proposed to release him, they spurned the proposal, and repeated their demand, *Crucify him ! Crucify him !*

Their clamours prevail. He is sentenced to death, and carried to execution. As he hangs on the cross, they feast their eyes, for a time, with the dismal spectacle. They pass by him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ah! Thou, who destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross." They cast on him a scornful eye, and say, "He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let him save himself, if he is a king."

But soon the scene changes. The sun withdraws his beams, and the heavens, at noon day, are wrapt in darkness; the earth trembles; the rocks are rent asunder; the repositories of the dead are disclosed; and the insulted Saviour, commending his spirit to God, bows his head, and, in exclamations of anguish, expires.—Look on the multitude now —see how they appear.—They, who before had triumphed in his misery, are struck with deep astonishment. One says, "Surely this was a righteous man." Another says, "This is the Son of God." *And all the people, who came together to that sight, seeing what had past, smote their breasts and returned.* They came to the execution with eager haste, and bitter zeal. They retired slow, silent, and pensive, with downcast looks and labouring thoughts.

Their smiting their breasts indicated some painful sensations within.

1. It expressed their *conviction* of the innocence and divinity of this wonderful sufferer.

Whatever sentiments they had entertained in the morning, they had now seen enough to extort

om them an acknowledgment, that this was a *ghteous man*—this was the *Son of God.*

This character Jesus had openly assumed; and ith unwavering constancy he maintained it to the st. Through all his trials he never once dissem- ed it; nor, in the least degree, departed from it, prevent danger, or avoid death.

Observe his *calmness.* Amidst the rudest and ost provoking insults, he discovered no malice or sentment toward his enemies; but all his lan- uage and behaviour was mild and gentle. When was reviled, he reviled not again; but commit- d himself to him who judgeth righteously.

See his *benevolence.* He attended to the case of s afflicted mother, and commended her to the re of his beloved disciple. He wrought a mir- le to heal an enemy wounded in the attempt to ize him. He extended mercy to a malefactor, ho was suffering by his side. He implored par- on for those, who were torturing him to death,

arated the most holy place from the common sanctuary, was torn from top to bottom. The earth was thrown into convulsions. The rocks were rent in pieces, and the graves, made in the rocks, were of course laid open. The dead bodies there deposited were exposed to view, and many of them rose after his resurrection.

The concurrence of so many miraculous events at the time of his death, forced on the minds of the spectators a full conviction, that he was the Son of God.

2. Their smiting their breasts was expressive of their *compassion* for this innocent and glorious sufferer.

Their rage, which had been wrought up to the highest strain, now began to subside, and give way to the tender feelings of humanity. They had discharged their malice, they had seen Jesus bow his head in death, and heard him groan his last; and their pity could sleep no longer. It was natural for them to reflect, how barbarously he had been used, and how serene he appeared—how horridly he had been injured, and how meek was his temper—how cruelly they had mocked him, and how fervently he prayed for them—how confidently they had declared him guilty, and demanded his death; and yet how innocent, how worthy of life. Here was the malicious execution of an innocent man.—Here was goodness in its real perfection, suffering death in all its tortures.

Amidst these reflections, which must now rush into their minds, no wonder if compassion swelled too big for utterance—no wonder if, in the anguish of pity, they smote their breasts and returned.

3. This action expressed a *deep remorse of conscience.*

When they had seen such convincing demonstration of the innocence of Jesus, and felt the re-

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rn of natural compassion, they could not well oid some reflections like these :—Why did we so amorously demand his death ?—Why so rashly d resolutely urge his crucifixion ?—Why did we t consider and examine, before we acted ? Why d we not move for his deliverance ; at least ac- pt it, when it was offered ?—How could we pre- r an infamous robber to this holy and just one ?— ow shall we forgive ourselves in being so active procure the death of one in whom no fault could found ?

With such selfupbraiding thoughts, they with- rew from the execution. The declaration of the ldiery, that he was the Son of God, and the deep nse of anguish which the spectators expressed in miting their breasts, may justly lead us to con- ude, that conviction, compassion and remorse, ow laboured in their minds.

We see what a mighty effect the sight of Christ's fferings had on the multitude : Whether it ope- ted in any of them to a real repentance, we are ot informed. But from the great success, which e preaching of the Apostles soon after had among e Jews, it is probable, that what they saw, heard d felt, on the day of the crucifixion, prepared

If Christ were now to suffer, in a place near at hand, Should we not choose to attend the scene, sad and mournful as it would be ?—Should we not wish to be near him, in his last hours, that we might testify our regard to him, obtain a blessing from him, hear his departing counsels, receive new confirmation of our faith, and feel fresh motives to obedience ?—If we would attend his sufferings, Why not attend an ordinance instituted to represent his sufferings ?—If it would have been useful to see him on the cross, Why may it not be useful to behold him in this solemnity ?—Here he is set forth crucified before our eyes.—Do we turn away from this ordinance ? We have little reason to think we should have attended the crucifixion on any higher motive than mere curiosity. If a real regard to him would have invited us to follow him to the cross, the same regard will invite us to come and see him at his table.

This table some of us are now approaching. Let us come with the same seriousness and collection of thought, as if we were coming to the cross itself. Let us attend to the design of this institution, that our minds may be duly affected, and that proper convictions, desires and resolutions, may be awakened.

1. Have any of you entertained indifferent notions of Christ and his religion ?—Come here, and reflect on those characters of divinity, which he exhibited.

When you consider the purity of his life—the variety of his miracles—the beneficence of his works—his patience under sufferings—his meekness under injuries—what wonders attended his death—how gloriously he was raised from the dead, and exalted to heaven—and what plentiful effusions of the Divine Spirit soon followed his ascension—you must confess, that he proceeded and came forth from God.

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a subjection to his commands, a
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religion is all divine, and infinitely
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breasts with conviction, and retu
timents, and better resolutions.

2. Here meditate on *the worth*

Have you, in the eager purs
signs, forgotten your eternal inte
ed the salvation of your souls?
salvation is, what it cost, and ho
valued. You are not redeemed
things, but with the precious
Think how the Son of God came
en, assumed human flesh, dwel
boured, suffered and died. For
this?—To procure salvation
How precious is the soul, which
ed by a price no less than this!
neglect your own souls, for the red
Jesus was willing to die! How ju
ed the condemnation of those, w
vation so dearly purchased! You
who, when Pilate offered [illegible]

look upon your suffering Saviour. Smite your breasts with conviction of the worth of your souls —return with new resolutions—work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

3. Here behold *the great evil of sin.*

Have you been disposed to excuse it—to make light of it—to flatter yourselves that God will not remember it—that he will admit you to happiness without repentance?—Look here, and learn another sentiment. Jesus, the Son of God, once suffered and died. Why?—It was for sin—not his own, but ours. He was wounded for our transgressions, that by his wounds we might be healed. He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Could not sin be forgiven without so vast a sacrifice? It is then exceeding sinful—odious to God, and dangerous to us. It must be forsaken, or we cannot be accepted. The death of Christ has opened a way for our pardon, but it has not changed the nature of sin. We can no more be happy in the love and indulgence of it, than if Christ had not died. He bare our sins, that we being dead to sin, should live to righteousness. If Jesus thus suffered, when our iniquities were laid upon him; What must they suffer, who, continuing impenitent, finally bear their own iniquities?—If these things were done in a green tree, What will be done in the dry? Look on a dying Saviour; consider how, and why, he suffered; smite your breasts under a sense of guilt; implore forgiving mercy; return with penitent hearts, and resolutions of new obedience.

4. Here meditate on the *wonderful mercy of God.*

You see the goodness of God in his daily providence. You feel his kindness in supplying your wants, healing your infirmities, rescuing you from dangers, and relieving your pains. Great are these

ercies in themselves, but small in comparison with *his* which you now see.

Here you behold his own Son given to be *your* aviour. Here you see this Saviour *crucified* for *ou*, *suffering* in *your* stead, *dying* for *your* sins, at you might obtain pardon, life and glory. God ent his Son to be a propitiation for your sins, that ou might live through him.

Here then is a sure foundation for your faith and ope. He who spared, not his own Son, but de-vered him up for us all, How shall he not with im also freely give us all things? Go to God with eep repentance, and be assured, he will not cast ou away. The blood, which has been shed, is ufficient to expiate, and the mercy which has been isplayed, is sufficient to pardon the most accumu-ted guilt. Look unto Christ, and be ye saved. Behold him suffering for sinners like you, smite our breasts in deep contrition, and say, *God be merciful to us sinners.* Thus may you return justi-

rebuke our own complaints, and chide our fretful spirits; let us smite our breasts in shame, and learn to be like him.

6. Look to Christ and learn to *despise the world.*

Are your affections set on things below? Are you anxious for future supplies?—Do you distrust the care of Providence under your worldly straits and embarrassments?—Consider him, who gave himself for you, that he might deliver you from this present evil world. Think how he lived above it; how contented he was in the most humble condition; how he shewed the vanity of the world, by dying on the cross; what blessings his death has purchased for believers; and whither he is gone to prepare for them a place with himself. Consider these things, and smite on your breasts, and say, We are crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to us, by the cross of Christ.

7. Look to Christ, and learn *meekness* and *forgiveness.*

When you meet with injuries, Do your passions rise?—Do malice, and revenge kindle and glow in your breasts? Think how different was the mind that was in Christ. How calm and gentle was he under the greatest provocations! Far from the thoughts of revenge, he prayed for those who shed his blood. In fervent intercessions for them he employed his dying breath. Can you, with this example before you, suffer anger to rest in your bosoms?—Come here, behold the most wonderful pattern of goodness and philanthropy, that ever was exhibited on earth, and then bid every resentful passion be still.—Come here, and forgive your enemies, and pray for them, who despitefully use you.—Come here, with a spirit of peace and love. Be like minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus.

benevolence, in love to mankind,
of, and in intercessions for his e
committing his spirit into the h
truth, and contemplating the joy
him.—As we should live like hi
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ises, and with heaven full in our

Thanks to our gracious Rede
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paths of life, and to guide us th
death. O send thy good Spirit
form us according to thine a
direct us in the way of peace—
our troubles—and to strengthen
flict.—And when it shall be thy
enable us to die like thyself, and
self in glory.

SERMON IX.

The Works of God, as King of Saints, great and marvellous.

REVELATION xv. 3.

Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

THIS is a part of the song of those, who, having adhered to the purity of religion, in times of great persecution, are now brought forth from their sufferings into a state of security and peace. Taking a review of God's dispensations toward his church, and his judgments upon her enemies, and contemplating the happy, but unexpected result of all, in the advancement of true religion, they are filled with admiration of his wisdom and goodness, and especially of his providence toward his saints, which had long been mysterious, but was now opening to their view. And, in the gratitude of their hearts, they break forth into this hymn of praise, a part of which has been read—*Great and marvellous are thy works—thou King of Saints—Who shall not fear and glorify thy name? For thou art wor-*

and apostate spirits are, in some
Though they obey not the law
they are under the restraints of hi
actions and disigns, though tendi
confusion, are overruled to serve
of his government. " The wratl
him, and the remainder of it he
this sense wicked men are called
are used, in his providence, as
complish the purposes of his wis

But he is King of *saints* in a m
culiar sense.

They yield a *voluntary* obedie
ment: And he administers his
immediate reference to their i
the objects of his peculiar care,
things to work for their good.

And his works, as *King of sa*
marvellous. Such indeed are
more eminently such are the wo
his saints.

We will illustrate this impo
thought.

I. The work by which the sai

misery, and restore them to forfeited life? In the view of all wisdom, but the divine, their case must appear desperate; be sure, when it is considered, that a superiour order of beings, having rebelled against their Sovereign, are cast down to hell, and reserved, in everlasting chains, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day.

When we behold the glorious Majesty of heaven, whose justice spared not offending angels, now moved with compassion to fallen men—providing for their recovery—appointing his Son to be their Redeemer—sending him into the world clothed in their flesh—laying on him their iniquities—subjecting him to death as a sacrifice for them, and raising him from the dead to be their advocate; we cannot but adopt the language of the inspired Psalmist —*This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.*

Every step in this divine work increases our admiration. It is wonderful that we should be redeemed, when apostate spirits were left unregarded; that a divine person should be constituted the Redeemer—that he should assume humanity and dwell on earth—that, instead of appearing in worldly dignity and power, he should make himself of no reputation—that he should submit to all the pains and dishonours of a most infamous and cruel death —that he should suffer death from the hands, as well as for the sins, of men—that he should make his grave with the wicked in his death—that he should ascend to heaven with the body in which he suffered, and with this body should appear in the presence of God, as a continual advocate for us!

This is a scheme which angels behold with wonder, and which men should contemplate with greatful astonishment.

You will ask, perhaps, Why did God choose such a method for the redemption of men? But tell

the Greeks foolishness; but to i
ed, he is the wisdom of God; b
ness of God is wiser than men, an
God is stronger than men.

The humble saint, convinced o
feels his need of mercy; and the
gratefully receives. He waits not
reasons of the gospel plan of grac
sents to take the benefit of it. He
for him, that mercy is offered to
He esteems it a faithful saying, a
acceptation, that Jesus Christ can
to save sinners. He adores that w
devised so marvellous a plan of salv
human wisdom could not ha
can fully comprehend, even now w

Some will ask, How can we pla
ence on a scheme of redemption, v
comprehensible? But, let me as
depend on any thing else, which
comprehension?—Can you tell, h
warm you, or how your food sus
you tell, how the grain, which y
field, springs up and bears fruit?
leet your husband

If we were to believe nothing but what we perfectly comprehend, our creed would be very short. If we were to do nothing, until we had discovered all the connexions between causes and effects, our circle of action would be extremely contracted. God governs us as rational creatures. In common life, we act rationally, when we rely on the providence of God, in that course of conduct, which experience shews to be successful. In the religious life, we act rationally, when we receive divine revelation on competent evidence, and trust in God for glory and immortality, in that course of humble obedience, which his sacred word prescribes.

However unsearchable the reasons of the great scheme of our redemption may be, the way in which we are to obtain the benefit of it, is plain and obvious. Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, are the conditions of salvation proposed in the gospel; and these we find no difficulty to understand. The only difficulty is, the evil heart of unbelief, which departs from God—the hard and impenitent heart, which treasures up wrath against the day of wrath.

The plan of redemption, though great and marvellous, is not so dark and mysterious, but that we discern in it much of the wisdom of him, who formed it. The sufferings of a Saviour for the sins of men, display, in the strongest light, the holiness and justice, the mercy and goodness of God. Nor can we conceive, how the danger of sin, and the encouragement to repentance and virtue, could, in any other way, be so strongly exhibited to sinners. If God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, How shall he not with him also freely give us all things? But if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, which, through this Saviour, offers pardon to re-

nting sinners, there remaineth no more sacrifice r sin.

II. Great and marvellous are those works of the ing of saints, by which he has *communicated the nowledge* of this plan of salvation.

It was the manifest purpose of God, to bring his bjects to glory in a way of obedience. Man, in s first creation, was placed under a law; obedi- nce to this law was the condition of happiness; by ansgression he incurred the penalty of death. It neither agreeable to the character of God, nor to e nature of intelligent creatures, that they should njoy happiness in a way of sin; for sin is contrary the design of God's moral government; and, in s direct tendency, productive of misery.

When man had offended, it was necessary to his pentance, that hope should be set before him; for ithout the hope of pardon, there can be no suffi- ent motive to repentance. This hope cannot arise om the law; for law, as such, makes no provi-

covered the mercy of God to pardon repenting sinners, as to encourage their humble application to him.

The promise made to the parents of our race, immediately after their lapse, gave a general assurance, that their lives should be spared for a season —that they should have posterity—and that, in some future period, one of their posterity, and this, in a peculiar sense, the seed of the woman, should in a way of suffering, conquer that enemy who had brought sin and death into the world. This promise was, from time to time, renewed in terms more clear and explicit; particularly to Enoch, Lamech and Noah, before, and to the patriarchs, after, the flood. As the term of human life was contracted, revelations became more frequent, because the conveyance of religious knowledge by tradition, grew more uncertain. Repeated communications from heaven were made to Abraham, and the most express assurance given him, that in his family a Saviour would arise, who should bless all the nations of the earth. In this family, the knowledge of the true God, and of a Saviour to come, was preserved, partly by instruction, and partly by immediate revelations, until the time of Moses, when a general system of laws and institutions was given from heaven, and committed to writing, for the benefit of the Jewish nation, and others, who would come and join themselves to them. Of these institutions a considerable number were designed to prefigure the Saviour, and point out the way of salvation through him.

In addition to this revelation, God continued among the Jews a succession of prophets, who being divinely instructed, often inculcated on them their duty, reproved them for their sins, warned them of judgments, and called them to repentance. And some of them in very plain and explicit terms,

others, the benefits of revelation
to them. In the patriarchal ag
Abimelech, Job, and several othe
ed with immediate discoveries of
some of them employed in comm
kind the discoveries, which they l

Many of the divine dispensation
were of such a nature, as might
tion of all around them, and give
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annual solemnities instituted in th
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the knowledge of religion. Th
prophets, and the frequent dispers
contributed much to disseminate
mong those who were remote fro
dea. So that revelation was not s
to this one nation, as some have se
At the time of Christ's appeara
general expectation of some extra
and reformer to arise in Judea.

Though this divine person con
chiefly to the Jews, yet he commis
tles to go forth and teach all natio

under the guidance of his Spirit, went forth preaching the kingdom of God, and proving their commission and doctrine by signs and wonders, which none could perform, unless God were with them.

The Gospel Revelation stands now established on the firm basis of divine testimony. As it was communicated by inspiration, so it was confirmed by miracles evidently divine. And notwithstanding all the persecutions and changes, which the church has suffered, this revelation, by the wonderful providence of God, is still preserved. By this we may fully learn all, which concerns us to know, relating to the grand scheme of our redemption, and the way to eternal glory. By this, not only are displayed to men the unsearchable riches of Christ, but is also made known to principalities and powers in heaven, the manifold wisdom of God.

Great and wonderful are these works of the King of saints.

When we consider the allglorious God stooping from his throne to converse with sinful men, inspiring some with the knowledge of his will, and the foresight of futurity, empowering *them* to convey this knowledge to *others*, and endowing them with miraculous gifts to confirm the heavenly origin of their doctrine—when we behold him working wonders to awaken the attention of stupid mortals, and bring them to a belief of the truth—when we see not only men, but angels; not only angels, but the Son of God himself, employed in ministering to our fallen race—when we trace the gradual progress of Revelation from the apostacy to the appearance of the Redeemer—when we observe how Revelation, granted to particular persons or nations, was made subservient to instruction of numbers besides, in distant nations, and remote ages—when we reflect how the knowledge of religion has been preserved, and its total extinction prevented, even in times of

But, What is that to you? C
this privilege; see that you im
are not favoured as highly, this
neglect. Adopt the language a
blessed Redeemer, when he re
said, *I thank thee, O Father,*
earth, that, though thou hast
from the wise and prudent, thou
to babes.

Is Revelation less useful to
are many who have not known
be excusable in your contempt
have been preferred to them?
his Lord's will, and does it not,
many stripes.

Will you question the truth
cause it is confined to a part of
well might you question the re
son, because some are destit
mong those who enjoy it, so
much higher degree than others
God is sovereign in the distribu
and divides them among his cr
he will. His works are marvel

gospel. Were there among mankind the same solicitude to acquire, and to spread the knowledge of religion, as to improve arts and commerce, the gospel would be far more generally known. Many nations, now in a state of ignorance, once enjoyed Revelation, but have put it from them; and the infidelity of one generation has entailed ignorance on those which succeeded; as we see, in a Christian land, the impiety of the father often corrupts and destroys the children.

After all, it must be remembered, that God will finally judge all men according to the talents which they have received. To whom he has committed much, of them he will ask the more.

Some perhaps will be curious to know, Whether they, who enjoy not the gospel, can be saved? But such curious questions need no answer, because they, in no respect, concern us. The Judge of all the earth will do right. That God who has given a Revelation, can, in such ways as he pleases, communicate himself to those who seek after him; for great and marvellous are his works.

There is another question more important, and more easily answered, Whether we who enjoy the gospel, can be saved, if we live in opposition to it? This is a question which the gospel has decided. They who put the word of God from them, judge themselves unworthy of eternal life. Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish. To such a question the same answer is to be given, as our Saviour, gave to one who asked him a similar question—Whether few should be saved? *Strive to enter in at the strait gate.* Be not curious to know, how it will fare with others. Be solicitous for yourselves. Work out your own salvation; for many who enjoy the offers and means of salvation, will, through their own neglect, perish, and be lost forever.

The Works of God, as King o marvellous.

REVELATION xv.

Great and marvellous are thy works, L and true are thy ways, thou K

GOD is here acknowl ter of *King of saints.* And hi saints, are called *great* and *ma*

These works of God we are to illustrate.

We have shewn,

I. That the work of redem has wrought, and in which the interested, is a marvellous work

II. That the various revelatio has brought the saints in the

These are the works, to which our text especially refers. When John saw the seven angels, having the seven vials of plagues, which were last to be poured on the earth, before the commencement of the glorious state of the church, then he heard the saints, who had gotten the victory over their enemies, singing this song—*Just and true are thy ways—great and marvellous are thy works, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy. All nations shall worship before thee; for thy judgements are made manifest.*

The church has, in all ages, been the object of God's peculiar care. Amidst all the revolutions, and all the corruptions, which have been in the world, this has been supported, and in it the knowledge of the true religion has been preserved.

When all flesh had corrupted God's way on the earth, Noah was found righteous; and he, with his household, was saved in that general deluge, which destroyed the rest of the human race.

Afterward, when idolatry had almost overspread the world, Abraham was called forth from among his kindred, that in his family the worship of the true God might be maintained. His posterity, when they were exposed to extinction by a famine, were miraculously preserved by a call to settle in Egypt. Here, for several generations, they were kept a distinct people, and then delivered by a mighty hand, and formed into a national and ecclesiastical state in the land of Canaan.

With a view to the maintenance of religion, God, for several hundreds of years, supported and defended this people, to whom he had committed his oracles; while other nations were destroyed, and the remembrance of them blotted out from under heaven.

When their iniquities were grown so great, that God gave them up to the power of the king of Baby-

which had long been the scourge
er nations, becomes subject to th
and Cyrus, a just and benevolent
alted to the throne, proclaims lib
and encourages and assists them i
ancient city and temple. Amidst
the great empires of the world,
were strangely preserved. And t
always hated, and often conquered
totally destroyed.

No reason can be assigned, wh
distinguished, but because God
the knowledge of the true religion
nor take from them his kingdom
was come, when it should be gi
tions.

No less remarkable have beer
Providence toward the Christian c

The religion of Jesus was firs
small number of Apostles, who h
commend them, but the simplici
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evidence of their miracles; while
where opposed by all the prejudic

there was a church of Christ; and there were saints even in Cesar's household.

The Christian church, without worldly wealth, or secular power, lived and gained strength through ten violent persecutions, which under the heathen Roman empire, continued, with some intermissions, for the space of two hundred and forty years.

In the time of Constantine the Great, these bloody persecutions ceased, and the church enjoyed security and peace. It now mightily flourished and prospered. But its prosperity was only for a season. In a few years, gross corruptions of doctrine and discipline crept into it; and even idolatry itself began to rear its head. When idolatry appeared, the spirit of persecution returned with all its former virulence and malignity. They who preserved the primitive purity of religion, were now persecuted by antichristian Rome, as Christianity itself had before been persecuted by pagan Rome. But still there was a number of brave and pious souls, who, in contempt of worldly dangers and sufferings, invariably adhered to the true religion of Christ.

When vice, superstition and ignorance, had widely spread, and nearly established their gloomy dominion in the Christian world, God, by a wonderful providence, raised up some extraordinary men, who, animated with primitive fortitude and zeal, stood forth in the cause of truth, opposed the errors and corruptions of the age, braved the thunders of the Roman pontiff, and the terrors of the civil power, and in a few years carried their reformation to such a surprising extent, that even princes and potentates embraced it, and lent their aid in its support and defence.

Had half the power, which has been employed to subvert the Christian church, been directed against any other people, it would soon have swal-

Roman empire, which succeed
mightiest of them all?—They l
ancient figure and importance.
have scarcely a name: The las
But amidst all the convulsions
changes of empire, the church
sometimes been brought low, but
ly ceased. God remembers his a
Though I make a full end of all
make a full end of thee—Thoug
shall be in measure. He has ofte
her declensions, but has not utt
He has removed her from place
never removed her from the earth.
vellous are thy works, Lord Go
and true are thy ways, thou King

How manifest is it to observati
holy, just and wise Providence,
world?

How evident is the divine orig
scriptures, whose predictions a
continually fulfilling before our
instances, so very remarkably in
the church.

How deplorable must be the state of a people, who, having enjoyed the dispensation of the gospel, suffer it to be lost in their hands!

How carefully should a people, professing the gospel, guard against declensions in religion? *Remember from whence thou art fallen*, says Christ to his churches in Asia, *and repent and do the first works. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain. Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent. If thou shalt not watch, I will come quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of its place.*

From the gracious promises of scripture, and from the marvellous works of Providence, we may be assured, that the King of saints will maintain his kingdom in the world, as long as the sun and moon shall endure. But of its continuance *with us* we can no longer be assured, than while we submit to its laws, and attend on its institutions. And if it should be continued, we can on no other conditions obtain a personal share in its eternal blessings. We are warned, that many of the children of the kingdom will be cast into utter darkness, because they have been workers of iniquity; while other subjects from unknown nations, and from all quarters of the globe, shall come and sit down in the kingdom of God.

With what joyful assurance may we look forward to the happy period foretold in scripture, when the kingdoms of this world shall submit to the government of Jesus Christ, the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved?

The great and marvellous works of God, in behalf of his church, are sure pledges and earnests of the accomplishment of those promises, which respect her glory and extent in the latter days.

The present condition of the Jewish nation, is a striking evidence both of the truth of the gospel,

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have had every motive, which
to drop their national and religi
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people, cannot be doubtful. T
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again into his church, from wh
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We proceed to observe farth

IV. That work, by which C
the saints for glory, is great an

Mankind, in their fallen st
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are incapable of enjoying the
heavenly kingdom. That cha
are made meet for this kingd
called *a work of God.* He beg
it. Not only the external mea
from him, but there is also a ki

a *resurrection* from the dead. "If any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature.*" "Except one be *born from above*, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "You hath he *quickened*—" "Ye are *risen* with Christ, through the faith of the operation of God."

The conversion of a sinner, is a great work, as it makes in him a *mighty change.*

He is formed to a new temper—is made partaker of a divine nature—has the same mind in him, as was in Christ. He walks in newness of life. Once he walked according to the course of the world, and yielded himself a servant to uncleanness, adding iniquity unto iniquity: Now he yields himself to God, as one who is alive from the dead, and his members instruments of righteousness to God. Once he placed his affections on earthly things; now they ascend to things above. He was once under guilt and condemnation; now he is brought into a state of peace with God, and is made an heir of the heavenly inheritance.

This is a marvellous work, as it is a work of *marvellous grace.*

By grace are ye saved, says St. Paul, *and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.* With respect to himself, he says, *I obtained mercy; and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant.* When the saint reviews his former guilty life, his stupidity, hardness of heart, unbelief, abuse of privileges, resistance of the Spirit, and opposition to the sentiments and convictions of his own conscience, he admires that grace, which effectually wrought in him to awaken him, and bring him to repentance and newness of life. He says, *By the grace of God I am what I am.* And, *God hath shewn the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness to me by Jesus Christ.*

This is a marvellous work, as it is wrought in a *marvellous manner.* Our Lord says to Nicodemus,

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. So is every one, who is born of the Spirit.

The *nature* of the change itself is very plain. It is the turning of the heart from the love of sin, to the love of holiness: The effects of it are also easy to be understood. These are putting off the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new man, which is created after God in righteousness and true holiness. But the *manner* in which the Spirit operates to effect this change, is, like other divine operations, wonderful, and, in a great measure, inexplicable. We know not how our own spirits move and actuate our bodies; much less can we explain, how the Divine Spirit influences and directs our minds. But we must believe, that that immense Being, who is above all, through all, and in us all; who compasses us around, and possesses our hearts and our reins, is able to excite in us pi-

This is a great and marvellous work, as it is *infinitely important.*

The unrighteous cannot inherit the kingdom of God. They must be washed and sanctified by the Spirit of the Lord. To be carnally minded is death: To be spiritually minded is life and peace.

How solicitous should we be to become the subjects of this great work; and to know whether we are the subjects of it?

Let none imagine conversion to be a small and trifling change; or religion to be a careless and superficial business.

Let none be satisfied with any evidence of their conversion, short of an habitual temper of holiness, discovering itself in a steady course of obedience to the gospel of Christ.

Let none delay the work of repentance, under an apprehension, that to accomplish it will always be at their own option, whenever they find occasion. If it is a work in which they are dependent on the grace of God, let them apply themselves to it now, when they have most reason to hope for this grace. There is such a thing as total hardness of heart. The longer the sinner neglects the concerns of religion, the greater is his danger of falling into this awful state. Therefore, seek the Lord, while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.

V. The dispensations of God's providence toward *particular saints*, in bringing them to glory, are great and wonderful.

All things work together for good to them who love God. The eyes of the Lord are upon them, and his ears are open to their cry. He not only hears their prayers, but does for them exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or think.

He answers their prayers in ways unknown to them—grants them many favours beyond what they asked, or could even imagine—causes those events

o operate for their spiritual good, which seemed to
ear a different aspect, and to have a contrary ten-
ency—conducts them along through dangers,
hich they thought it impossible to escape, and de-
vers them from many hidden evils of which they
ad no apprehension, until after they had past them.

He employs his angels as ministring spirits to
e heirs of salvation, and directs all the methods
f his providence to their ultimate safety and hap-
iness.

When the saints, once arrived to the heavenly
orld, shall from thence take a review of past
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ankful admiration of God's great and marvellous
orks towards them, while they dwelt below.
hey will then see, how they were delivered from
ch a danger, rescued from such a temptation, and
rried safely above such a snare. They will then
e, how such an adversity roused them to a sense
f duty, such a disappointment prevented some fa-

divine works, which once, they thought, were against them. They will then tune their harps to the heavenly song—*Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.*

But the most surprizing scene of all, is the glory and felicity of the heavenly state into which they have entered.

While they dwell on earth, faith looks up to the superiour world, with high and lively expectation. It meditates with pleasure on the image of heaven drawn in the sacred pages, and anticipates a small portion of the good which is there. It believes that the boldest description of language—yea, the loftiest flight of imagination falls far short of the glorious reality. But when they actually arrive to yonder world, how will they be surprised to find the vast disparity between former conceptions and present enjoyments! When they perceive themselves in the immediate presence of the all glorious Jehovah, in the company of the blessed Jesus, and surrounded by congratulating angels and fellow saints; When they feel themselves discharged from their conflicts with sin and temptation, and freed from every perverse and untowardly motion: When they find every virtuous disposition suddenly ripened to its proper perfection; their minds expanding to admit new and vast ideas of God and the works of God; and their spiritual affections now purged from the foul dregs of sensuality and worldly care, and rising aloft in the purest and warmest devotion—What will they say?—With what songs will they express the rapture of their joy? They will know the truth of the Apostle's sentiment—a sentiment, which, under severe trials below, they could scarcely realize. *I reckon that all the sufferings of the present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed. These*

Why fails your courage, wit
await you ?—Why sink your s
sity presses upon you ?—Yo
saints. Just and true are his w
vellous are his works. Who sl
rify his name ? Trust your Gc
tain you ; call on him, and he
him, and he will deliver you i
His grace is with you—his prov
you—his angels encamp aroun
see that he is good. Blessed is
eth in him. Fear him, ye his
no want to them who fear him.

This troubled scene of things
Glory and joy await you in a
world. There you will give pr
his works ; yea, for many of
now cause anguish and grief.

Let it be your only solicitude
him, who has called you to his
You have set your faces toward
constancy and courage in the pa
and truth, looking forward to tl
soon be revealed. Under every
ation. maintain your confidence

SERMON XI.

God glorified in the Punishment of Sinners.

REVELATION xix. 1, 2, 3.

And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Allelujah, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God. For true and righteous are his judgments, for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Allelujah; and her smoke rose up forever and ever.

THIS great whore, which corrupted the earth with her fornication, and which, in the 17th chapter, is called *Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots*, is supposed, by interpreters, to be *the Church of Rome.* She had been the chief promoter of idolatry and superstition, which, in the language of scripture, are often stiled fornication and adultery. The 18th chapter describes the destructions of this idolatrous power, and the general lamentation, which, on that occasion, should be heard among the nations connected with her. But while those nations mourned, the church of God should give thanks, and heaven itself should join in the

We will make some observa
ick hymn which has now been

I. The number of the hea
vastly great. John heard the
in heaven.

The angels, who kept their
numerable company. The sa
of great tribulation, are called
no man can number. There
who are saved.

If in that period of Christi
and superstition most prevaile
lence of persecution obstructe
ligion, there were such multitu
How inconceivably great must
of happy beings, when all wh
that period, all who have been
who shall be saved in the unk
future ages, shall be collected ir

The time marked in the te
the great, or the antichristian c
stroyed. After this Satan is bou
pure religion spreads without o
walk in the light of God's ch

happiness, which shall ultimately result from the gospel. When we look around, and see errour and vice abounding—many nations destitute of the gospel—among those who enjoy it, many living in direct opposition to it, and more treating it with utter neglect; we feel a melancholy pity for our fellow sinners, who appear to be in great danger for want of the gospel, or in danger still greater by their abuse of it. But our minds are much relieved in contemplating the brighter side of the scene, which exhibits to our view such numbers of the human race, who shall eventfully become partakers of the offered salvation. Delightful is the thought, that truth will finally prevail against errour, and virtue triumph over vice. God will gather out of his kingdom all things which offend, and them who do iniquity, and will cast them into a furnace of fire; and then the righteous shall shine forth in the kingdom of their Father, numerous as the stars, and glorious as the sun shining in his strength.

II. The people in heaven are much employed in the social exercises of devotion. John heard them calling on one another to "praise God," and ascribe to his name "salvation, honour, glory and power."

The saints on earth are not entire strangers to this employment. They see much of God's glory displayed in his works. They behold bright discoveries of his purity, goodness and wisdom, in his word. They experience the power of his grace, and the riches of his mercy toward themselves. And in the contemplation, their hearts are often warmed with gratitude, and their lips are tuned to praise. But, compared with the heavenly state, this is a scene of darkness, sorrow and sin: Hence prayer, humiliation, repentance and watchfulness, make a great part of their work. In heaven it will be otherwise. Joy and gratitude will fill every soul;

the diversions of sensible thi
mate and warm each other by
In that numerous assembly th
fering designs, jarring affecti
voices. John heard the voice
their voice was one. *Praise*
glory to him. How rarely do
on earth joined together in
speaking the same things? I
have their different worldly vi
ciety, Christians have their va
which they contend with too
unyielding obstinacy. How
who have covenanted to walk
dividing into parties, withdraw
communion, and judging one
provoking to love and good w
in heaven?—No; if it were
cease to be itself. Love is ther
the life and soul of happiness.
ferent degrees of perfection
will be no envy on the one pa
lence on the other; no unsoc
lignant tongues. All voices w

n heaven, with social and benevolent affections. There can be no complete happiness without society. Even heaven, if we were to be there in a state of olitude, would lose much of its delight. In soci-ty there can be no happiness without union. The aints in glory, are described, as acting with one lesign, and praising God with one voice. There s no acceptable worship without a spirit of peace nd love. We must be like minded one toward a-nother, that we may with one mind and one mouth glorify God. By a temper of love we are to pre-are for heaven; and by union in divine worship we are to improve our love. This temper we must ever aim to carry with us into the worship of God; nd with a view to strengthen and exalt it, all the arts of worship must be conducted. So capital in he Christian scheme is this grace, that we are di-ected, above all things, to put on charity—to have ervent charity among ourselves—to love one anoth-r with a pure heart fervently. It is by the love of he brethren, that we are to prove to ourselves that we have passed from death to life, and manifest to others that we are the disciples of Christ. While we worship God together in peace and love, we are preparing for the world of love. When we make he worship of God an occasion of disunion and contention, we pervert it to a contrary effect. To them who are contentious and obey not the truth, will be rendered indignation and wrath.

III. Here is pointed out to us one principal sub-ject of the heavenly devotion.—"Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God, for true and righteous are his judgments." This hymn of praise is sung to God, in conse-quence of his judging that idolatrous power, which had corrupted the earth.

The angels and saints in heaven are attentive to the state of the church on earth. They observe

blest above. Those benevol
the diffusion of truth, virtue
our race of mortals. They l
sions to their own number. T
when one sinner repents; and
ligion generally prevails, and
ually rising to join their happ
the hundred and forty and f
out of the tribes of Israel, we
multitude, which no man cou
nations of the earth, John sa
immediately *these* shouted—
the Lamb; and then all the ang
rubs fell on their faces before
shipped God, saying, *Blessi
wisdom, and thanksgiving, a
God forever.* Such a mighty i
was recognised by a general sor

The saints give thanks for
They admire and adore the lo
called them by his grace, and
our, who has redeemed them

They give thanks for each c
the conversion of sinners, t

These pure minds are incapable of malice and revenge. They rejoice in the destruction of corrupt and persecuting powers, only as by this the great obstacles in the way of truth are removed, and a more effectual door opened for its general spread and increase. Their joy springs from benevolence. The suppression of those who have corrupted the earth, is the suppression of corruption itself, and the means of advancing the virtue and happiness of the world.

We may observe farther,

IV. The punishment of the wicked in the future world, will be eternal. *Her smoke rose up forever and ever.* There is nothing more plainly declared in the gospel, than a future judgment, and the distribution of rewards and punishments. The declarations of the gospel, on this subject, are fully agreeable to the dictates of human reason. There is an obvious difference between virtue and vice; and according to this difference we must suppose the righteous Governour of the World will finally treat his subjects. As there is no visible distinction at present made between the good and the bad, a distinction doubtless will be made in a future state.

Experience teaches us, that virtue tends to happiness, and vice to misery. This is evidently the divine constitution. To suppose that the latter should be made happy, as well as the former, is to suppose, that there is an inconsistency in the divine government, and that the future distribution of good and evil will contradict the settled course of things in the present world.

Reason teaches us to expect a difference. How great the difference will be, reason cannot conjecture—Revelation only can inform us. This opens to our view most astonishing scenes. On the one hand, thrones and kingdoms, honour and immortality, fulness of joy, and an inconceivable weight

punishment.

The former we readily beli
ter ourselves with the idea of
we are willing to believe the
end. The latter we receive
sometimes with distrust. E
secret hope, that if he is to e
py. The conscious sinner i
hopes divine mercy will be
death; and he is willing tc
should miscarry, there may b

To guard us against such
flattery, the scripture has e
duration of the punishment
great variety of unequivocal t
fords not an expression more s
than this in the text. *Her smc*
and EVER. Correspondent tc
language of inspiration.—The
gospel will be punished with *e*
—Their worm *dieth not*, and
ed.—When God gathers the w
will burn the chaff with *unq*
unbelieving and abominable s
the lake which burns with fire

ing, that they shall not enter into his rest. For the son of perdition, it had been good that he had never been born. These expressions preclude all hope of an eternal happiness to succeed a temporary punishment in the future world. Were this to be the case, unbelievers would finally enter into rest; and it would, on the whole, be good for them, that they were born.

You will say, "An eternal punishment is vastly disproportioned to temporary crimes."—But, How do you know, that crimes are temporary? The act indeed is transient; but the effect may be perpetual. Can you tell, how many you have corrupted by your wickedness?—How long the corruption will continue?—To what number of generations it will reach?—How many will carry with them into the other world, the corruptions infused into them by your example in this world?—If we are to judge of the duration of the punishment by that of the wickedness, we can set no bounds to it. The short continuance of the action can be no standard for the punishment. It is not so in human judgments: Why should it be so in the divine? We never think a criminal the more excusable, because he accomplished his villany with dispatch; nor will this circumstance be an excuse at the bar of God.

Some would persuade themselves, that an endless punishment is not consistent with the goodness and mercy of God. But the same argument might as well prove, that there will be no punishment at all; and if no punishment, then certainly no misery—no unhappiness among any of his creatures. And yet misery, we see, there is in this world. The goodness of God does not prevent all misery; and therefore, merely from his goodness, we cannot conclude that, in another world, bounds will be set to the misery of the incorrigible, or that any

period for this? If these thi
to the divine character, you
final abuse of the limited tria
unlimited punishment. If
granted, the punishment wh

Besides; Is it inconsistent
to establish a connexion bet
misery? This will not be pr
ion we see there is. If vice,
virtue, universally prevailed
human life be tolerable? On
wicked men carry with them
vicious dispositions contracte
they will of course be mis
they are immortal, their mi
The question then is simply t
tice and goodness of God rec
sinners, in order to put a p
which grows out of the inve
their hearts?

At the close of this proba
told, he who is unjust, will b
who is filthy, will be filthy st
means of goodness and con

ıusly within him? And if his sin remains, his mis-
ry must continue.

This is then the situation, in which we are plac-
d. Made for immortality, endued with reason and
noral agency, and fully instructed in our duty, we
tand accountable to the great Creator. Happiness
ınd misery are set before us—the terms of happi-
ıess are stated, with every motive to urge our com-
)liance—the path which tends to misery is strong-
y marked, with every warning to avoid it—all ne-
:essary helps are offered us in the pursuit of glory
—and awful guards are placed against our entrance
)n the path of destruction; or, when we have
nadly entered, the most importunate calls pursue
ıs to remand us back. What would we more?
Our choice must decide our fate. If we choose
he way of death, we destroy ourselves, and our
nouths will be stopped. To us, with peculiar
orce, may be applied the words of Moses to the
people of Israel, "I call heaven and earth to record
ıgainst you this day, that I have set before you life
ınd death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose
life."

V. Our text plainly instructs us, that the saints in heaven will glorify God for the eternal punishment of the wicked. They said, *Allelujah; and her smoke rose up for ever and ever.*

This voice of jubilation springs not from joy in the misery of the wicked, absolutely considered; but from a view of the rectitude of the divine government displayed in their punishment, and a view of the important ends which it will promote. There is no malevolence in heaven; none of the upbraidings of malice, the insults of pride, or triumphs of revenge; but there is a perfect approbation of the ways of God, and joy in the glorious consequences which follow from his righteous judgments. Particularly,

justice in the destruction of t
admire his mercy in the s
They see it to be a righteous
compense tribulation to the for
to the latter. He will then be
and admired in all them who
will judge the world—approve
against a guilty world. They
marvellous are thy works, L
just and true are thy ways,
Who shall not fear thee, and
thou art holy."

2. The punishment of the
occasion to admire God's gra
tion. They sing—*Salvation*
true and righteous are his judg
their salvation to God; not t
take not the glory into their o
it to him. When they behold
of misery, and see the smok
rising, they offer the incense
iour, who has redeemed them
every people and nation, and
and priests unto God. Th
more glorious, when they beh

We are not to conceive that the merciful God punishes sinners from a delight in their misery. He has declared the contrary.—*I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his way and live.* Punishment in the hands of God is always just, and always designed for a reasonable end. The judgments, which he executes on sinners in this world, are not merely because their sins deserve them, but because the wise and benevolent purposes of his government require them. And we may rationallv suppose, that there will always be, in the divine government, some great ends to be promoted in this way. We are not to imagine, that when our globe shall be dispeopled, God's moral government will be finished. There are other worlds, and, for aught we know, other probationary beings. We know not how wide the intelligence of the dreadful doom of guilty men may spread through the creation of God, nor how far it may be made a warning to other moral beings. The apostacy and punishment of the angels who kept not their first state are communicated to us, and applied for our warning; and perhaps, in distant periods of duration, the apostacy of the human race, and the punishment of those who refused the salvation offered them, may be communicated to other beings, and applied for their warning. We know not how far the general happiness may be advanced by the exemplary punishment of the impenitent part of our race. There can be no doubt, that the uses and ends of their awful doom are better known in heaven, than they can be known on earth. Saints and angels certainly see reason to glorify God for his righteous judgments on the guilty. The glorious way of salvation, and the tremendous consequences of neglecting it, are enough for us to know at present. So much we are taught. Let us be wise and improve the instruction.

REVELATION xi

And after these things I heard a great v
saying, Alleluiah, salvation, and g
er, unto the Lord our God. For t
judgments, for he hath judged the g
rupt the earth with her fornication,
of his servants at her hand. And
and her smoke rose up forever and

THIS is a Hymn o
church in heaven, on occasic
that idolatrous and persecuti
long corrupted the earth, and
of God.*

In our meditations on this h
ed;

That there is much people

That the people there are

A state of future punishment for the impenitent is here plainly supposed, and the eternal duration of it strongly expressed. And when the smoke of their torment arises, the saints and angels are represented as saying—*Hallelujah; salvation and glory to the Lord our God.* We must not conceive them as rejoicing in the misery of others from malice or revenge; there are no such passions in heaven. They rejoice not in the punishment of the ungodly, considered simply as misery: But they adore the holiness, truth and justice of God displayed in their sufferings. The sight of this awful scene raises their admiration of, and gratitude for, the salvation bestowed on themselves. And as the punishment of the wicked must be supposed to answer some great purposes in God's moral government, so these purposes are better understood in heaven, than they can be here on earth.

On these thoughts, we enlarged in a former discourse. It is proper that we now attend to the practical and instructive uses of a subject so solemn and interesting.

1. It appears that the happiness of the saints in glory will suffer no interruption from a sight of those in misery, who were once dear to them on earth. They justify God in the punishment of these, as well as of others.

In the present life there is a natural, and a civil connexion between saints and sinners. They dwell together in the same society—in the same vicinity —and often too in the same family. They are united in their worldly interests, and in their natural, or contracted relations.

Children are dependent on the parent, and he, in his turn, may be dependent on them. The husband and the wife, have a common concern in the family, and there usually is, and always there ought to be, a strict union between them. The brethren of the

praise with their tongues—and
character in works of righteousn
to one another. It is in this man
to glorify him.

But, How great a part of the r
ny him this tribute of glory? V
angelick host have revolted from
and are pursuing a rebellion again
race have apostatized too. And
a divine Saviour to recover them,
to return! How many live with
in the world, insult his authorit
name! How many neglect th
which is offered them, and tramp
blood, by which it was purchased
believe, or disregard the gospel
invitations, mock his warnings,
and grieve his Spirit!

If the heathens, who are vain
tions, and change the glory of G
made like to corruptible man,
God; much more do they, who
yet despise it, through breaking t
dishonour him. The wicked li

our text, concerning Babylon—*She corrupted the earth with her fornication.* Every man, who openly avows errour, and boldly practises vice, is corrupting the earth. By one root of bitterness many are defiled.

Sinners are now called to repent and give glory to God. If they despise the call of God's grace, his justice will exact glory from them in their punishment. If they will not serve the interest of his kingdom by a voluntary obedience, they will be made subservient to it by involuntary sufferings. If they will not hear, nor lay it to heart, to give glory to his name, he will send a curse upon them, that the world may discern between the righteous and the wicked.

Rational beings must be useful in some way or other. They must answer some end in God's extensive government. If they refuse to honour him, and to promote the interest of those around them, in their probationary state, he will, in the state of final retribution, so dispose of them, that honour will result from them to his great and dreadful name, and important ends will be answered in them by his awful power. When they shall be set forth as an example suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, a voice of much people will sound through heaven—*True and righteous are thy judgments, O Lord, for thou hast judged them who did corrupt the earth.*

This thought should deeply impress every heart. Our existence is not an indifferent and trifling matter. It will certainly answer some great purpose in the grand scheme of God's government. The Creator allows us the opportunity and means of making it forever happy. He assigns us a part to act in the world. In acting this part, we give glory to him, and contribute to the happiness of his creatures. If we rebel against his authority, we must

Their punishment will a
ings to be entirely just;
cousness, and truth of Go
be a subject of the songs of

Many of the troubles of t
insupportable, if they we
compassion and succour
condolence and pitty afford
der afflictions which they
this small consolation will
are confined in the regions
suffering under an immutab
they call, there will be none

God will shew them no
of infinite goodness, slow to
—waiting to be gracious—
when justice shall take the
patience, he will not pity, nc
cy. His anger will smok
will separate them unto all e

Jesus Christ will no mor
cessor.

The grace of the Redeen
from heaven to die for guilty

will shut up his tender mercies. When once has risen and shut the door, he will no more re-d their calls. Though they plead, Lord, Lord, en to us; he will answer, "I know you not, ence ye are. Depart from me, all workers of quity." Because he has called, and they have used—has stretched out his hand, and they have regarded, but have set at nought his counsels l reproofs; he will mock when their fear comes. ey shall call, but he will not answer—shall seek, l shall not find him. They shall eat the fruit of ir doings, and be filled with their own devices. The saints will shew no pity. What was spok-to Jerusalem, when for her impenitence she was en over to destruction, may here be applied—*ho shall have pity upon thee?—Who shall bemoan e?—Or, Who shall turn aside to ask, how thou t? Thou hast forsaken the Lord, and art gone kward. He has been weary of repenting. His nd is stretched out against thee.* Their hopeless, pitied misery, is most affectingly represented by Saviour, in the parable of the rich man, who d in impenitence and infidelity. *In hell he lift-up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham r off, and Lazarus,* who had in vain sought re-f at his gate, *lying in the patriarch's bosom. And cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on , and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tor-nted in this flame.* But Abraham said, *Son, re-mber, that thou, in thy life time, receivedst thy od things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but w he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And les all this, between us and you there is a great lph fixed, which cannot be passed.* As obvious sons why no mercy could be extended to him, raham refers him to the justice of God in his nishment, and to the immutable decree, which

had dared to violate, he wa
those blest abodes, which he
On the other hand, Lazarus
of life with patience, had tru
ble assurance, and had looke
hope, to a better state; and t
afflictions were now rewarde
solations. And as for sendi
the severity of his torment
for the different states of the b
ed, though in sight of each
as to admit no intercourse.

In the present world, ma
and many means are used, f
ners; and blessings are ofte
sequence of the fervent petit
of their pious friends: Bu
they will enjoy such advanta

The godly parent now war
sels his children with affecti
sees them still bent on the
weeps over them, and suppli
terposition of divine grace fo
thought of their eternal dest

are full of evil while they live, and who, with thoughtless presumption, are hastening down to the dead. But in heaven they glorify God for his righteous judgment on them, who refused the overtures of his mercy.

How wretched will be their condition, when all their sins, in full weight, fall upon them, and their presumptuous hopes sink under them—when they are cast forth from the presence of God into utter darkness, and there are none to pity them! O that they were wise, that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end!

4. How carefully ought sinners now to apply the assistances which they have, in order to their preparation for future glory. The time is coming, when there will be none to help them.

It is the duty and concern of good men, in this world, to reclaim the wicked from their destructive ways, and save their souls from death.

Ministers are to watch for souls, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. They are to take heed to themselves and to their doctrine, that they may save themselves, and those who hear them.

Parents are to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to teach them sound wisdom and discretion, guard them against dangerous temptations, and restrain them when they make themselves vile. They can have no greater joy than to see their children walk in the truth, and to look forward, with strong and lively hope, to that glorious day, when they shall appear among the blessed of the Lord, and their children with them.

The aged, by their holy example, and heavenly conversation, are to teach the young to be sober-minded.

and rebukes?

You are now under the stat
tion; and there are those near
joice to assist you in the grea
for another world. There ar
times offer you their assistan
these means can be enjoyed
They will cease in another. I
help you there. Advantages, c
nal happiness depends, and wh
now, ought to be improved with
It is the voice of wisdom—*Hea
wise, and refuse it not. Bless
heareth me, watching daily at
at the posts of my doors. Who
life; but whoso sinneth again
own soul.*

Ye who despise instruction a
who neglect the public instituti
or attend them in a careless a
ner—ye who disobey the cou
the warnings of parents, and b
kind restraints, which they lay
give indulgence to every evil i

things, God will bring you into judgment. Can your heart endure, or your hands be strong, when God shall deal with you? He has spoken it, and will do it. And you will mourn at the last, when your flesh, and your body are consumed, and will say, *How have we hated instruction, and our hearts despised reproof? We have not obeyed the voice of our teachers, nor inclined our ears to them, who instructed us. We were in almost all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.*

5. We see the madness of sinners, who, for a transient pleasure, expose themselves to permanent misery.

The wise man looks forward to futurity. He considers what will make him happy on the whole. It is not the enjoyment of today, or tomorrow, of this year, or this life only; it is the happiness of his whole existence, which determines his conduct. He will not pursue a present pleasure, at the hazard of incurring future misery, greater in degree, and longer in duration. For misery, though future now, will be real when it comes. How contrary to this dictate of wisdom is the conduct of wicked men! Some present interest or gratification is the motive which draws them into iniquity; and yet they know full well, that the advantage is momentary, and the pleasure transient; but the consequence of sin, indulged through life, is permanent as their existence, and more dreadful than their imagination can paint. What infatuation is here; Ye men of reason, be astonished at this!

Esau stands marked in scripture, as an example of folly and profaneness. He for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. The indulgence was a single meal—The loss was his birthright. The birthright, once alienated, was gone forever, and the blessing with it, and could never be regained. Afterward, when he would have inherited the

zealots in a false religion
with distinguished severity ;
zeal, the more extensive the m

It is vain to imagine, that
approve and accept all, who, as
sincere in their way ; i. e. zeal
the religion which they have ad
or false. Who more zealous
that corrupt body, which, in tl
ised by an infamous name ?—V
more pains, used more arts, and
to spread their doctrines in tl
we find, that their zeal and eng
not as an excuse for, but as an
crimes—not as a reason for a
extenuation of their punishme
why they should be punished w
They had corrupted the earth
smoke arose, the people in heav
It is mentioned in scripture, as
mate wickedness, when men no
have pleasure in them who do
nounced by the Saviour against
chiefly grounded on that false z
propagated their corrupt opini-

is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."

How dangerous is it then to corrupt the essential principles of religion! God has taught us what religion is. His gospel is plain. If we err from the truth, it is through the corruption of the heart. Think not that mistakes will excuse you, when the mistakes themselves proceed from the love of sin, not from the want of light. They who fall into strong delusion to believe a lie, because they love not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness, will receive a distinguished condemnation.

How dangerous is it to deceive and seduce others! To become partakers of their sins! How careful ought we to be, who are teachers of religion, to understand for ourselves, and declare to you, the whole counsel of God! How cautious should the parent be, that he give to his children only good doctrine—sound wisdom—not the instructions which cause to err from the words of knowledge! How watchful should every Christian be, that he seduce none into errour or vice—that by no evil communication he corrupt good manners!

Finally, How glorious is that salvation, which the gospel reveals!

It is a deliverance from that awful state, which we have been contemplating. It is a great salvation, purchased at an infinite price. It is an eternal salvation—a salvation which saints and angels celebrate in perpetual songs. Since Christ has died to procure it for us, let us be solicitous to obtain a share in it. By a neglect of it, our future misery will be mightily augmented. Imagine not that your attention to such an object may safely be suspended. When the happiness, on the one hand, is so vast; and the danger, on the other, so amazing, every day's neglect is presumption and madness—every day's neglect adds guilt to guilt, and danger to danger.

cepted time, and day of salvat
your day, the things which b
Delay not, lest they soon be hi

Now our Lord Jesus Chris
even our Father, who hath love
word of salvation, give us ev
and good hope through grace—
in every good word and work
tain the salvation, which is of
ing joy.

SERMON XIII.

Jesus rising early for secret Prayer.

MARK i. 35.

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

THE morning here mentioned followed a Jewish sabbath, on which Jesus had been very diligently employed in the duties of his publick ministry. It is said, verse 21st, that Jesus, with some of his disciples, whom he had lately called to attend him, *went into Capernaum; and straightway, on the sabbath day, he entered into the synagogue, and taught.* He carefully observed all divine institutions. It was his custom to repair to the synagogue on the sabbath, and there instruct the people, who were assembled for divine worship. His example reproves the carelessness of those, who forsake the assembling of themselves together; and instead of entering into the house of God, do their own ways, and find their own pleasure, on his holy day.

ed in so publick a manner, was
around through all the region.
attended the synagogue worshi
ligence of this surprising work,
ed to their respective homes.
the sun was set, they brought u
diseased, and them who were po
And all the city was gathered to
the house where he was. The
lawful to bring their sick to be
bath; but when the sun was s
was ended, they brought to hin
parts of the city, and he healed

After spending the evenin
work, he retired to rest. But
only a short repose. *In the n*
great while before day, he dep
place, and there prayed.

You will remark,

I. How diligent the Saviour
ment of his time.

Many great and important v
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But, What was the work, which called him so early from his bed, and so constantly employed his wakeful hours?—Was it the acquisition of wealth, honour or dominion?—Was it the destruction, or subjugation of hostile nations? Was it settling the form and establishing the foundation of a temporal kingdom?—These things were remote from his thoughts. He had neither houses, nor lands, nor any kind of worldly property; nor sought he any. More destitute than the birds of the wood, and the foxes of the mountain, he had not where to lay his head. So distant was he from all ambitious views, that when the people, struck with admiration of his power, would have taken him by force and made him their king, he refused the offer, and hid himself from their search. What work was it then, which so mightily urged his diligence?—It was the salvation of fallen men. The present occasion seemed exceedingly favourable to this great design. There was a most encouraging appearance, which he would by all means improve. His preaching and miracles, on the preceding day, had spread the fame of his wisdom and power, and awakened a general inquiry after him. When he arose and went out, his disciples followed him, and as soon as they had found him, they said to him—*All men seek for thee.* He answered—*Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth. And he preached in the synagogues throughout all Galilee.* The circumstances of mankind called for his instructions. The present attentive disposition of the people promised an opportunity to do them much good. The time allotted for his ministry was but short; no more than three or four years. He therefore resolved to fill up his time with diligence, and to improve with particular attention, a season so inviting as the present. He would not waste in useless slumber the

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busy and important parts of the year. On these principally depends the life of man. *He who will not plough by reason of the cold, shall beg in harvest, and have nothing. He who sleeps in harvest, is a son that causeth shame.* We all condemn the man, who, in these seasons, will yield to sloth, or give himself to pleasure. But let us remember, that our whole life is seed time. And according to our sowing will be our harvest. He who soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he who soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. The seed time allowed us is short and uncertain. The season, once past, cannot be recalled. What our hands find to do, let us do it with our might.

Worldly diligence, however commendable, must never be allowed to exclude the concerns of futurity. These demand our attention every day, amidst the most urgent calls of our secular business. If in our immoderate labour and carefulness for the world, we deny ourselves leisure, or deprive ourselves of capacity, for the daily exercises of piety, and for an attendance on the publick institutions of religion, we invert the order of things, and make our greater concerns give way to the smaller.

The Christian is to fill up his time in a useful manner. Worldly business justly claims its proper place; but claims no more. It must ever leave room for the vaster concerns of immortality. Whatever thought we may take for the body, we must seek first the kingdom of God.

We may remark,

II. That no crowd of company, or calls of business, could divert Jesus from his daily, stated devotions. He rose up before day, and retired to a solitary place for prayer.

While Christ dwelt on earth, his thoughts were much in heaven. He maintained a constant inter-

course with the world above; and God heard him always. As a man he was, like others, dependent on God. As a man of sorrow and affliction, he had more occasion than others for that relief which comes by prayer. The Apostle says, that *Christ, in the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him who was able to save him from death; and was heard in that he feared. And though he was a son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered.*

One end of his appearing in the flesh, was, that he might exhibit to mortals a complete example of that religion which is adapted to their nature and condition. He was made in all things like unto us, that he might in all things shew us what we ought to be, and how we ought to walk. He became a man, that he might teach men how to glorify God; and he was placed in a state of affliction, that he might teach the afflicted how to draw consolation from the fountain of mercy.

By withdrawing with his disciples from the multitude for social devotion, he has recommended family prayer. By retiring to solitude for his own personal devotion, he has recommended secret prayer. On some occasions, he spent whole nights in prayer to God; on others, he retired often, in a short time, to repeat the same petitions. In our text it is said, that *he rose up a great while before day, and departed to a solitary place, and prayed.*

The circumstances of his retirement, on this particular morning, shew that secret prayer was a stated morning exercise; an exercise which he was careful never to omit. It does not appear, that he always rose so early for prayer; but his rising so early this morning, shews that he made morning prayer his daily practice.

The transactions of the preceding day had drawn together a vast concourse around the house where he lodged. The evening he had spent in healing the sick, who had been brought to him in great numbers. When he retired to rest, the multitude were waiting in the neighbourhood to see him in the morning. The disciples observe to him, that all men were seeking him. He knew, that, by morning light, he should again be thronged by the admiring multitude, whose close attendance would prevent his retirement. Lest, therefore, he should find himself under a necessity of omitting the secret devotions of the morning, he rose earlier than usual, and before the people could have time to collect. Had secret prayer been only an occasional, not a daily exercise, he would not have taken this precaution to prevent the omission of it. If he had thought proper to dispense with it at any time, he would doubtless have excused himself from it at such a time as this, when he could not attend it without the selfdenial of rising long before day, and the labour of retiring to a solitary place.

His example then clearly instructs us, that secret converse with God, is a duty which we should daily attend, and from which we should not be easily diverted. Jesus could find a time and place for retirement, even when the duties of his ministry were most urgent, and when the multitude were impatiently waiting to hear him. That he might not omit his retirement, nor disappoint his hearers, he rose the earlier. Shall we then excuse ourselves from secret prayer, or run it over with precipitancy and indevotion, because our worldly affairs solicit our attention, or company is waiting around us?—Can we not suspend our secular cares, or our ordinary pleasures and amusements, long enough to converse with God, and implore his favour and blessing? How different is our spirit from the mind which was in Christ! I will not say, there is no oc-

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hile it was yet dark, and retired, unseen by the ultitude, to a solitary place.

Agreeable to this example, is the precept which gave to his disciples—*When thou prayest, thou alt not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray anding in the synagogues, and in the corners of the reets, that they may be seen of men. But thou, hen thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when ou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, who is secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall ward thee openly.*

1. One reason why we should retire to a secret lace for solitary prayer, is, that we may avoid the ppearance of ostentation.

All our religion must be without hypocrisy. Whatever we do, we must do it heartily, as to od, and not to man. A supreme regard to the plause of the world, mars the virtue of our best tions.

There are some duties, which, in their nature,

pocrisy are they guilty, who, retiring to fields, or groves, or other solitary places, there pray with an elevated voice, that they may be heard at a distance, and deemed uncommonly fervent and devout. *Secrecy* is a circumstance expressly enjoined. And to pray with loud vociferations in a field or wood, is as inconsistent with secrecy, and with sincerity, as to pray in the corner of a street. A needless ostentation of our piety and devotion is hypocrisy, in whatever manner this ostentation is made.

2. Another reason for secrecy in our personal or solitary prayers, is, that we may be undisturbed.

Too easily are our pious thoughts diverted by objects, which present themselves in our way. The noise and tumult of the world will interrupt our devoutest frames. Even in retirement the spirit of devotion will often languish; and impertinent thoughts will insensibly steal in upon us. Prudence will therefore direct us, as far as possible, to shun external diversions. When we shut the door of our closet against the intrusion of worldly objects, we must shut the door of our hearts against the entrance of worldly thoughts. We may often be surprised with them before we are aware; but we must not invite them. On the contrary, as soon as we discover them, we must banish them to a distance, and call in devout meditations to fill our minds. The more vacant the soul is of pious and heavenly affections, the more room is there for evil thoughts to enter. When the house is empty and swept, unclean spirits come in and dwell there. To shut the door of the closet, is the means of preventing disturbance from abroad. But in vain is this door shut, if the door of the soul is thrown wide open for every irregular passion and earthly care to rush in and occupy the place. Who is he that engageth his heart to approach unto God? Him God will cause to draw near to himself.

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swers. The forward motions of his love, David joyfully experienced.—*I said, I will confess my transgressions unto thee; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray to thee in a time, when thou mayest be found.*

This example of our gracious Redeemer may be applied for the reproof of the irreligious, and the encouragement of the godly.

They who wholly neglect, or often intermit, the duty of secret prayer, are reproved by this example. Christ made it so much his constant exercise, that, rather than once omit it, he would rise before day, in a morning too which followed a laborious evening. Awakened and encouraged by this example, let us daily draw near to God. Let us never yield to trifling diversions, nor suffer the cares of the world to extinguish the spirit of devotion.

They who plead the want of leisure, or the want of place, for retirement, should consider, that when labours crowded, Jesus found leisure by rising the earlier, and when company thronged, he found a solitary place, by departing the farther.

Let those, who neglect the care of their souls, remember how laborious Jesus was in the work of men's salvation. Was that a trifling object for which he was so ardently engaged?—Or, Can you be safe in neglecting a work in which he was so assiduously employed?

Great was that salvation which the Son of God came to procure for sinful men. Great were his labours, and greater his sufferings, in this design. Great was the price which he paid for our redemption. How shall we escape, if we neglect this great salvation?

What mighty encouragement have we to seek it! The Saviour, who was so laborious in our cause, will approve and aid our labours. He, who was so

uch in prayer for men while he was on earth, will gard our humble prayers now he is in heaven. He able to save to the uttermost them who come to od by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession. He has departed from this world, and ascended into heaven, to appear in the presence of God r us. Let all men seek after him. They who ek shall find. Them who come to him, he will no wise cast out. He has commanded us to seek m; and he has not said to us, Seek ye me in vain.

SERMON XIV.

Family Prayer.

EPHESIANS vi. 18.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.

OUR text might naturally lead us to consider the duty of prayer at large: But what I have more especially in view, is the duty of *family prayer.* This is one kind of prayer, and therefore one thing intended by the Apostle, when he directs us to pray *always* with *all* prayer.

If family prayer was practised by pious men, under the old testament, and in the time of our Saviour and his Apostles, as I shall shew that it was; and if the expression, *pray always*, is generally used to signify *daily* prayer, as I think will appear in its proper place, then we must suppose, that in this exhortation, family worship is included, and principally designed.

I shall therefore,

I. Shew our obligation to family prayer.

II. Inquire what reasons there are for stated morning and evening prayer.

III. Represent the manner in which family worship ought to be performed.

I. I shall shew our obligation to family prayer.

The scripture, in giving us rules of conduct, has ot descended to every minute case, nor stated the recise limits of duty in every possible circumtance; for had it done so, it would have been too oluminous for common use. All that we can exect from it, is, that it should lay down such genral rules, as common reason, with an honest heart, ay easily apply to all particular cases; and should lustrate these rules by such familiar examples, as ill, on all occasions, direct us to a just application f them. And this is what it has done. It has, or instance, explained and inculcated the duties of ustice and charity; but has left it to human reason apply the general precepts to particular cases. o it has urged the duty of prayer, pointed out any of the occasions of it, and shewn the temper ith which it should be performed. But it has not istinctly specified all the possible occasions or matrs of prayer. To have done this, would have

If this is a duty, Who are the persons to associate for the performance of it? Certainly they who are in a capacity to meet together—they who are connected by common interest—they who share in the same wants and the same favours—they who are united in affection, and can make each other's cases their own.—Who then are under so strong obligations to this duty, as the *members of a family*? They dwell in the same house—they naturally care for each other—their afflictions and mercies are in common—if one member suffers, the rest suffer with him—if one be honoured, all rejoice. A family then is such a society, as is under the first obligation to social worship. If you can find any precept in the Bible, which enjoins social worship, you need look no farther: You have found one for family worship.

You will not deny, that it is your duty, as the master of a family, to bring up your children and domesticks in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But, Can you do this without the maintenance of family worship?—Will the younger members of your household act under a sense of God and religion, when they see you regardless of him, and of the honour which you owe him?

To impress on tender minds devout and pious sentiments, nothing can be better adapted, than family worship; in which they daily hear a God acknowledged, his perfections adored, sin and guilt confessed, pardon and grace entreated, their dependence recognized, and every needed blessing implored.

If prayer belongs to religion, you are to instruct your children in this, as well as other parts of religion. And, Is not example the most familiar and successful method of communicating to the young religious instruction?—Without this will other means avail? Prayer was one thing, in which Jesus

nd John instructed their disciples: And, Is there ot the same reason why you should instruct your hildren in prayer? And, How can you so easily each them to pray, supply them with matter for rayer, and impress their minds with a sense of its nportance, as by requiring their daily attendance, hen you address the common Father, in your own nd their behalf?

In most families there are some, who have not apacity distinctly to apprehend, and properly to xpress their own wants. These need the assistnce of others. Now, as children can understand language, before they can speak it with propriety; o they can join in a prayer, before they can frame ne for themselves. If then it is your duty to asst your younger domesticks in prayer, it is your uty to lead them in such petitions, as you would fer to God for them, and wish them to offer for emselves.

Does not family worship appear to you rea-

left his native country, his kindred, and his father's house, on account of the idolatry and irreligion which prevailed there, and came with his family into the land of Canaan, for the sake of enjoying the pure worship of the one true God. In his pilgrimage he made various removes; but wherever he chose a residence, we find that he immediately built an altar to the Lord, and there called on his name. How highly God approved his piety in maintaining religion in his family, you learn from the commendation given of him in the xviiith chapter of Genesis:—*I know Abraham, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*

The example of Joshua, in the xxivth chapter of his history, is pertinent to our purpose. He says to the people of Israel—*Fear the Lord and serve him, and put away the strange gods, which your fathers served, on the other side of the flood,* meaning Abraham's idolatrous ancestors, *and in Egypt,* where their ancestors had been corrupted, *and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose ye, this day, whom ye will serve: But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* To *serve* the Lord, in the language of the old testament, usually signifies, to *worship* him. This must be the meaning of the phrase in this place, because it stands opposed to the worship of *strange gods.* But, How could Joshua resolve for his family, as well as for himself, that they should worship the Lord? Most certainly he maintained stated forms of social worship in his house, and required their attendance. In this manner you may make and execute the same resolution. When he commanded the *people* to fear the Lord and serve him, doubtless he meant, that they should serve him in

e same manner, in which he served him himself. If shua then spake under divine direction, here is express command, binding all heads of families maintain the worship of God in their houses.

The next example which I shall mention, is that Job, chapter 1st. When his children, according the family custom, were holding a feast on each e's birth day, *he sent and sanctified them, and se up early in the morning, and offered sacrifice cording to the number of them all; for he said, It ay be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in eir heart.* *Sacrifice*, which was accompanied th prayer, often signifies divine worship in gen-l. Job *sent and sanctified his children.* He call- upon them to prepare for, and join in, the reli-ous solemnity, which he was about to perform. e offered sacrifice *according to the number of them* . He presided in the solemnity, and addressed e Deity in a manner adapted to the several cases his children. It is added, *Thus did Job continu-*

his children were about him, in his own house, and under his immediate care? In this view, the example comes with additional force.

We have also the example of David, 2 Samuel, vi. The king had brought the ark of God and set it in its place, had blessed the people in the name of the Lord, and distributed among them his royal bounty. And when these things were done, *all the people departed, every man to his house; then David returned to bless his household*—to bless them, as he had before blessed the people. To *bless* another in the name of the Lord, is to *pray* for a blessing upon him. Thus Aaron and his sons are directed to *bless the people, saying, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee, and make his face to shine upon thee.* David's *blessing* his household, must then mean his praying for the blessing of God to attend them. And that this was an act of social worship, at which his family were present, is evident from the circumstance of his returning to bless them. Had it been only a secret prayer for them, it might as well have been made elsewhere, as at home.

Our blessed Saviour, whose life was filled up with religious services, often took his disciples apart for prayer, and other acts of worship. We read of his *going up with them into a mountain to pray;* and of his being *alone praying, and his disciples with him.* He was *alone* in relation to the *multitude,* whom he had just before dismissed; but in the company of his disciples, who were his family. They were *with him,* while he prayed.

You remember the high commendation given of the centurion Cornelius, in the xth chapter of the Acts. *He was a devout man, and one who feared God with all his house—ond prayed to God alway;* or *daily,* at the stated hours of prayer, which were morning and evening. Can it be thought that this devout Gentile had no prayers in his house? Or,

hat the attendance of his domesticks, at the hours prayer, was not required?—How then could he said to pray *alway*, and to fear God *with all his use*? The happy consequence of his family de-tion, you well know. God heard his prayers, di-cted him, in a vision, to send for Peter, who, at e same time, was divinely instructed to go with e centurion's messengers, and tell him words, by hich he and all his house should be saved. The postle went and preached to them. They believed, ere baptized and received the Holy Ghost. Sal-tion, you see, came to his house, in consequence that devout spirit, by which he worshipped God, ve alms, and prayed alway.

In the apostolick times, frequent mention is ade of churches in particular houses. *To such one and the church in his house*, is a common sal-ation. On the other hand, we meet with saluta-ons, *from such an one and the church in his house.* his phrase cannot import, that all the Christians,

Do you call for express precepts?—our text is one. Pray *always* with *all* prayer. The word *always*, applied to prayer, is an allusion to the morning and evening sacrifice, which was called, *the continual sacrifice*, and therefore plainly directs us to *morning* and *evening* prayer; as I shall have occasion to shew under the next head. And *all prayer* must include family prayer. Indeed if no such thing as family worship had ever been known, and the Apostle had been about to introduce a kind of worship entirely new, he would probably have been more explicit. But as it was then, and long had been known and practised in religious families; had been a usage among the patriarchs and the Jews, and was continued among Christians, it must necessarily be included in this universal injunction.

The Lord's prayer is an express command for daily family prayer. It is introduced in the form of a precept. *After this manner pray ye.* That social prayer is intended, cannot be doubted, for the form runs wholly in the plural number. In the preceding verses, our Lord gives directions for *solitary* prayer. In treating of this, he uses the singular number. *When* thou *prayest enter into* thy *closet, shut* thy *door, and pray to* thy *Father in secret.* He then passes to *social* prayer, and, as his subject naturally led him, he changes the number. *But when* ye *pray, use not vain repetitions—after this manner pray* ye, Our *Father who art in heaven.* Not only the change of number, but the disallowance of *repetitions* and *much speaking*, shews that social prayer is the subject; for these, though improper in joint prayer, for very obvious reasons, may be admitted in solitary prayer, where we may breathe the feelings of the heart with less regard to order, time or diction, than when we are speaking in behalf of others. Our saviour continued *all night* in *solitary* prayer. He prayed *three times*,

aying the *same words.* I would observe farther: This form is intended to direct us in *daily*, as well s social prayer; as appears from the fourth peti-ion, *Give us* this day, *our* daily *bread.* Family rayer must here be principally intended; for a mily is the only society that can meet for *daily* rayer.

You will also find an express command in the vth chapter of the epistle to the Colossians. The Apostle is here, and in the preceding chapter, reating of domestick and relative duties, as the du-es between husbands and wives, parents and, hildren, masters and servants; and to *these* he mmediately subjoins a precept concerning prayer. *Continue instant in prayer, and watch in the same vith thanksgiving.* As the duties incumbent on amilies are his subject, it is natural to suppose hat family prayer is here intended.

I shall mention but one authority more, which is hat of the Apostle Peter in the iiid chapter of his

her, he supposes it to be more obvious, that they should live together in social prayer, than that she should be obedient to him, or that he should give honour to her.

I will only remark farther, that in this passage the Apostle considers joint prayer as incumbent on small families, such as consist only of the husband and wife. He urges a suitable treatment of each other in the conjugal relation, that their prayers may not be interrupted. Let this be considered by those, who have newly entered into a family state.

I have the more largely stated the arguments for this duty, because some have pretended, that there is no warrant for it in the word of God. Such insinuations are as groundless, as they are dangerous. The very persons who make them, will, under certain circumstances, shew that they do not believe them. If they should hear of some officer in the church, or of some Christian professor, who neglected family worship, they would not fail to censure and reproach him. But, Is this a duty incumbent only on certain characters? In a time of family distress, they will desire that prayer may be made in their houses. But, Are they dependent on God only when they are sick, or when one lies dead by their wall? Live under a sense of your continual dependence, and you will pray always with all prayer.

Let heads of families stand within their houses, as priests of God, offering the sacrifice of prayer and praise continually. Let the younger members give a serious attendance, realizing the divine presence, and approaching it with godly fear. Let your houses become as churches of God; and the churches will become more glorious. Let them be the places, where prayer is wont to be made, where God's word is read, and where suitable in-

ructions are given, and the services of the sanctu-
y will be more edifying. Happy is the family,
hich, with united hearts, serve God and pray al-
ays—happy the man, who is the head of such a
mily—happy the members of a house, which is
essed because of the ark of God—happy the
urch, which consists of such families. Such a
urch is one greater family, whose members are
rsuing one common design; and the families
e so many smaller churches, all builded together
r an habitation of God, through the Spirit, and
owing unto an holy temple in the Lord.

SERMON XV.

Family Prayer.

EPHESIANS vi. 18.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.

IN our former discourse, on this text, we considered our obligations to maintain the worship of God in our houses.

We will now, as was proposed,

II. Inquire, whether there is any thing in reason, or scripture, leading us to fix on morning and evening, as the stated seasons of family worship.

1. Our prayers, certainly ought to be *frequent* and *constant.*

So much, at least, must be intended by our Apostle, when he directs us to pray *always.* Whatever reasons oblige us to pray at all, bind us to pray often.

We are continually dependent on God, and indebted to him. We daily feel new wants, or the return of former ones, and receive fresh favours, or the repetition of past ones. We often commit of-

ences against God, and contract new guilt. If hen it becomes us *at all*, it becomes us *often* to epair to the throne of grace with earnest petitions or the blessings which we need, and thankful prais- s for those which we have received; with humble onfession of conscious guilt, and penitent supplica- on of God's gracious pardon.

If prayer is useful, *frequency* in it will make it nore useful. One use of prayer is to cherish and trengthen our serious sentiments and resolutions, which, through the infirmity of the flesh and the nfluence of worldly objects, are too apt to languish nd decay. It is by frequent communion with God, that our souls, which so naturally cleave to he dust, are raised above the world, enlivened in uty, and made to feel the power, and taste the leasure of religion. If our converse with him hould be but seldom, our holy affections and pur- oses, in the long intervals, would die away; and his deceitful world would get such strong pos-

are to pray *always with all prayer*—to pray *without ceasing*—*to continue instant in prayer*—to *watch thereunto with all perseverance*—to *pray always and not faint*—*in every thing to make known our requests.* What less can these expressions import, than such frequency in devotion, as to keep alive a devout, spiritual and heavenly temper?

2. If we are to pray frequently, then there must be some *stated* seasons of prayer; for otherwise it cannot be attended with decency and order.

As it is necessary that certain days should be stated, by divine appointment, or by mutual agreement, for *publick worship*, that the whole church may come together into one place, and at the same time; so it is necessary, that certain hours of the day should be stated for *family* worship, that all the members may with one mind, and one mouth, glorify God. Accordingly we find in scripture, that there were periodical times, called the *hours of prayer*, which pious men used constantly to observe. Peter and John went up into the temple *at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.* What less can we understand by the directions, to *pray always*, and *without ceasing*, than that we should have some *fixed* and *stated* seasons of prayer? When we pray at all proper seasons, and keep alive the spirit of piety, then we may be said to pray *always.* Prayer has a just proportion of our time and attention.

3. It is evident, that prayer ought to be a daily exercise.

Our Saviour instructs us to pray after this manner—*Our Father who art in heaven, give us this day our daily bread.* The Psalmist says, every day *will I praise thee*—*I will* daily *perform my vows*—*I cry unto thee* daily—*I have called* daily *upon thee, and stretched out mine hand unto thee.* It is the voice of wisdom—*Blessed is the man who heareth*

worship.

In the morning, when we
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of the day, how decent and
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Keeper who never slumbers
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We can therefore more rea
ship of God, and more easily
distraction.

Lord, to sing praises to thy name, O Most High, to shew forth thy loving kindness in the morning, *and thy faithfulness* every night. He is speaking, not of *secret* but of *social* Prayer. By the former we may offer our praises and petitions to God; but it is by the latter only that we *shew forth*, and *declare* his loving kindness and faithfulness. This, he says, ought to be done, in the *morning* and in the *evening;* not only on special occasions, but *constantly every* night. And he must have particular regard to *family* worship, for families are the only societies, which can *every* morning and night associate for divine worship.

We find that devout men, under some peculiar circumstances, observed other hours of solitary or private prayer. Daniel, in his captivity, prayed *three times a day.* David says, *morning, noon,* and *night,* will I pray. And again, *Seven times a day* will I praise thee. But the more common hours of prayer, especially of *social* prayer, mentioned in scripture, are *morning* and *evening.*

Job rose up *early in the morning and offered sacrifice* for his family. David says, *My voice shalt thou hear in the* morning, *O Lord; in the* morning *will I direct my prayer unto thee. I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the* morning. *I prevented the dawning of the* morning, *and cried.* Heman says, *In the* morning *my prayer shall prevent thee.*

We have many examples of evening prayer. David, having spent the day in publick devotions, *returned* home *to bless his household. Let my prayer,* says he, *be set forth as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the* evening *sacrifice. Commune with your own heart* on your bed—*offer the sacrifices of righteousness.—I will lay me down and sleep, for thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety.*

It was the duty of the Levites to stand *every morning* to thank and praise God, and likewise at

vening. When David had replaced the ark, he ft before it some of the priests, to minister conmually, as *every day's* work required, and to offer urnt offerings to the Lord *continually*, *morning nd evening*, and to do according to all that is writn *in the law of the Lord.* The law of Moses inituted a particular sacrifice to be offered *daily*, alf in the *morning*, and half in the *evening*. This as called the *continual* sacrifice. And as this was ccompanied with prayer, here is an express instiution of *morning* and *evening* prayer.

This sacrifice, after the temple was built, was ffered there—and there, such as dwelt near, usuly attended at the hour of sacrifice. To this initution our Lord alludes in the parable of the phariee and publican, *who went up to the temple to pray.* Vhen Zacharias entered into the temple to burn inense, the whole multitude of the people were without, *praying at the time of incense.* They who, y reason of distance, or other circumstances, could

ways—to pray *without ceasing*—to offer the sacrifice of praise *continually*. And thus we are to understand, what is said of Anna the prophetess, that *she departed not from the temple, but served God with prayers night and day.*

Thus from the institution of the morning and evening sacrifice, which was accompanied with prayer; from the practice of pious men under the old testament, and of the Apostles and early Christians under the new; from the frequent direction to pray *always*, which plainly allude to the continual sacrifice, and from the express words of the Psalmist, who recommends it, as a good thing, to shew forth God's loving kindness in the morning, and his faithfulness every night, it fully appears to be the indispensable duty of every Christian family to maintain the stated worship of God, and to attend upon it, ordinarily, every morning.

I proceed now to shew,

III. In what manner our family worship ought to be performed.

1. In this, as in all other religious exercises, there must be an *attention* and *engagedness* of mind.

We are directed to *pray in the spirit*—to *watch unto prayer*—to *lift up our hearts, with our hands, unto God in the heavens.* It is the *inwrought* and *fervent* prayer, which avails much. If while we draw near to God with our mouths, our hearts are far from him, we worship him in vain. Our prayers must be the expressions of real, heartfelt desires, not the tinkling of an unmeaning cymbal. God hears the *desire* of the humble. Without the concurrence of the heart, bodily exercise profits little. We must draw near to the throne of grace, with a serious, collected and devout spirit. This is alike the duty of him who leads, and of them who join in prayer; for unless these adopt the petitions which are made, and, with the words of the

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should require his domesticks to give a serious and orderly attendance, and should choose those seasons, which will best admit of it, and most easily comport with it.

4. Family worship should be maintained *steadily, without unnecessary omissions.*

It is the Apostle's direction to families, that they *continue* in prayer, and *watch* in the same with thanksgiving. The morning and evening sacrifice was offered *continually.* The Apostles were *daily,* with one accord, in the temple. There is ordinarily the same reason for prayer and praise, *every* day, as *any* day; for we *daily* need, and *daily* receive new favours from God. Our Saviour has taught us to pray, Give us *this day* our *daily* bread. We must not admit little trifling excuses for the omission of this duty. Too great an indifference to this important exercise appears in those, who are frequently abroad themselves, and allow their children also to be abroad, at such unseasonable hours, that it must either be often neglected, or performed at a time, when few of the family are present, and none of them in a suitable frame and preparation to attend it.

5. The *matter* of our addresses should be taken from the *common concerns,* and the *manner* of them adapted to the *common capacities* of the family.

Job offered burnt offerings for his children *according to the number of them all.* He accommodated his prayers to the state of his household; and so ought every parent.

There are many wants, and many mercies, which are common to all. These are always proper matter of our joint devotions. Some members may be under peculiar circumstances of joy or sorrow. If one member suffer, all are to suffer with him. If one be honoured, all should rejoice. The state of each member, so far as it is a common concern

nd worthy of so serious notice, ought to be introuced into our family worship.

In most families, there are some, whose minds re tender, and whose capacities are but small: He herefore who speaks in prayer, should utter with e tongue things easy to be understood; and hile he prays in the spirit, he should pray with the nderstanding also; else, How will they who occuy the room of the unlearned, say, Amen, at his etitions and giving of thanks, seeing they underand not what he says?

6. In our daily worship, *tediousness* should be abided.

"For want of prudence in this matter, it is posble, some young persons, in religious families, ave been led to disrelish religion, more than they ould otherwise have done." Youthful minds cant long be fixed in close attention, without pain nd weariness. When the service becomes burdenme, it is no longer edifying. If family worship

children to regard it. If, while he is strict in his prayers, he is loose in his morals, or if, while he requires their attendance on the forms of devotion, he indulges them in the practice of iniquity, he represents religion as a self-contradiction, and teaches them to view it with utter contempt. When Jacob was about to erect an altar to God at Bethel, where God had ordered him to dwell, he said to his *household*, and to *all who were with him, Put away the strange gods which are among you, and be clean, and change your garments, and let us arise, and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God.* The Apostle Peter urges husbands and wives to a virtuous behaviour in that relation, *that their prayers be not hindered.* He teaches them, that they cannot pray together to their own, and the family's edification, unless *they live together, as heirs of the grace of life.* David contented not himself with blessing his household, but resolved, that he would *behave himself wisely in a perfect way —that he would walk within his house with a perfect heart—and that he would not countenance* in his family *a wicked person.*

I shall now close this discourse with two remarks.

1. Union between the heads of a family appears to be a matter of great importance.

The maintenance of social worship, and the transmission of religion, by a pious education of children, is evidently one end for which families are formed. Where prayer is hindered, one great design of the domestick relation is defeated. Social worship can be acceptable only when it is offered with humility, meekness and love. Fellow worshippers must be like minded one toward another, lift up holy hands without wrath, and forgive, if they have aught against one another, or against any man. Wrath, clamour and contention are palpably contrary to the spirit of prayer. If the heads of a family, who ought to be one spirit, as well as

ne flesh, live in eternal brawls, wrangles and con-
adictions, What is their house but a Babel?—
midst such a tumultuous scene, Can the members
nite their hearts and voices in the daily worship of
eir Creator? Or, Will God regard their offering,
r accept it with good will at their hands? God is
ot the author of confusion, but of peace. Let all
ings be done decently and in order.

2. If social worship, and the religious education
f children, are duties incumbent on all heads of
milies, then there ought to be a knowledge of the
ature, a belief of the principles, and a regard to
e duties of religion, in all who enter into the mar-
ed state. The ignorant, the unprincipled, the
rofane, when they unite to become the heads of a
ousehold, are often the guilty instruments of bring-
g forward a family for ruin. Let none think them-
lves qualified for so important a trust, until they
ve acquired such a knowledge of religion, and
ssess such a sense of its importance, as to be a-

tion. For this purpose, you must maintain the worship of God in your houses, in the manner which has been recommended. Perhaps there are some who study evasions and excuses, and determine to continue in their neglect. But after all you can say, I dare appeal to your conscience, whether there is not such evidence of the indispensable obligation of this duty, as would be more than enough to satisfy you in any case, where your mind stood previously indifferent. I dare appeal to your conscience, whether you are restrained from praying in your family, by a persuasion that it is an unscriptural and unwarrantable practice; or by an apprehension that it will bring guilt on your soul, and misery on your family. I dare appeal to your conscience, whether your neglect of family worship is not owing more to a spirit of indifference, than to any real scruples in the matter. Bring the question home, for once, to your conscience, Whether you did not first omit it through disinclination, and then seek reasons to justify the omission? It was not a sense of duty that dictated the neglect; but previous neglect that suggested your evasions of the duty. However easy it may be, in the days of prosperity, to reconcile your minds to a prayerless life, yet in the day of family adversity, when your children are by death torn from your embraces, or when you feel yourselves under his arrest, the reflection on such a life will pierce you through and through. Encouraged by God's gracious promises in favour of the godly and their houses, and awed by the threatenings of his wrath against the families which call not on his name, adopt the resolution of the pious captain of Israel *As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

SERMON XVI.

A Christian Family helping their Minister.

ROMANS xvi. 3, 4, 5.

reet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus; who for my sake have laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

quence of this edict, Aquila, with his wife, came to Corinth, and there wrought in his occupation, which was that of a *tent maker.*

He is said, by the ancients, to have been a man of great learning. St. Jerom makes mention of him and of his writings. He says, the books of the prophets were, by this learned Jew, translated from the Hebrew into the Greek language, for the benefit of the Greeks. From this translation, which was extant in his time, he makes frequent quotations.

Paul, coming from Athens to Corinth, meets with Aquila, takes lodging in his house, and abides there for some time, working with him in his occupation, as he had leisure; but preaching every sabbath, in the synagogue, to Jews and Greeks, who resorted thither to hear him. It was probably at this time, that Aquila and his wife first gained the knowledge and professed the faith of the gospel. As they enjoyed Paul's company for some time in their own house, as well as heard him preach statedly in the synagogue, they doubtless became well instructed in the nature and evidence of the Christian religion. Accordingly we find, that they were able to expound to Apollos the way of God more perfectly, than he had before understood it.

Paul's residence with them laid a foundation for a close and intimate friendship, which we find remaining until the time of his death. In his second epistle to Timothy, which he wrote in his last bonds, when he was ready to be offered, he remembers them in his salutations.

How worthy they were of his affection and esteem, we learn from the character given of them in the words which we have chosen for our text. With united attention they had helped Paul in his labours for Christ. With the hazard of their own lives they had preserved *his* for the service of the

hurches. And while they promoted the general terest of religion, they were careful to maintain it their own family. They had a church in their ouse.

The contemplation of the character and example these pious persons, will bring home to us some structions in our own duty.

I. This godly couple appear to have been happily nited in all their concerns, and especially in the eat concerns of religion.

On all occasions they are both mentioned togeth- ; neither of them is once named without the oth- . They were one flesh, and one spirit. They ppear as patterns of conjugal union. They dwelt gether in days of tranquility, and jointly shared the calamities of banishment. With united nds they laboured in the occupation by which eir household was supported. Wherever one ent or resided, the other attended; whatever bu- ness employed one, the other assisted; and in

As this is one of the most important relations in life, to the parties themselves, to society, and to posterity, they who sustain it, ought, above all things, to study mutual peace. This will render the relation a blessing; without this it will become a vexation and a curse.

The Christian pair, considering themselves as having one common interest, and feeling themselves animated by one soul, will readily participate in each other's labours and sorrows, and will cheerfully communicate to each other their own pleasures and joys. The rougher paths of life they will tread hand in hand, and, by reciprocal smiles of content, will beguile the tiresome walk. The pains of life they will lighten by bearing each other's burdens, and heighten every enjoyment by sharing it in common. In the education and government of the family, they will strengthen each other's hands; and, instead of contending for an idle superiority, will combine their influence for the good of the household. Little differences of opinion will be composed by mutual condescension. Accidental mistakes and trivial faults will be overlooked, or viewed with the eye of candour. More serious errours will be mentioned with tenderness, and corrected with meekness. Real virtues and worthy actions will meet the cheering smiles of approbation; and worthy designs will be encouraged by a prompt, unsolicited concurrence. Unavoidable infirmities will be viewed with the comforting eye of pity, not with the insulting eye of disdain. Real failings will not be matter of keen reproach, but of kind expostulation. Under trifling inconveniences they will not tease and vex each other by eternal complaints; nor under severe misfortunes will they imbitter each other's spirits by mutual upbraidings. But on the contrary, by examples of patience, cheerfulness and heavenly mindedness,

they will elevate their own and each other's minds above the smaller, and fortify them to bear the greater troubles of this changing world.

In the important concerns of religion, they will walk, as being heirs together of the grace of life, that their daily prayers be not hindered, their virtuous resolutions weakened, nor their good works obstructed. While he leads in the devotion of the family, she will encourage him by her personal attendance, by calling the attendance of her household, and by such a prudent disposition of her domestick affairs, as may give seasonable opportunity for the solemnity. When he administers instruction or reproof to those under their care, she will prudently second it; or, if she thinks it misapplied or illtimed, she will not defeat his honest intention, by open, petulant contradiction; but rather, by private advice, prevent future mistakes. In their spiritual walk, they will be fellow helpers to the kingdom of God, animating each other by mutual counsel and example, and considering each other to provoke unto love and good works.

Such a conduct in the domestick relation is recommended by the example of this amiable pair, and enjoined by the precepts of the gospel of Christ.

Paul, in his epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, directs, that this relation be distinguished by mutual affection, tenderness, fidelity and submission; and that every thing which is bitter, be far removed from it—that the love, on the one hand, be like that which Christ shewed to the church; and the submission, on the other, like that which the church owes to him. The instructions of the Apostle Peter, on this subject, are to the same purpose. Their conversation must be chaste and pure; their adorning, a meek and quiet spirit; their language and manners, expressive of mutual

honour and esteem; and all their conduct, such as tends to engage affection, encourage a virtuous life, and assist in the necessary preparation for the world of glory.

A family, educated under the care of heads thus united in all the duties of the secular, domestick and religious life, will, by the smiles of heaven, grow up in knowledge and piety, and, like the household of Aquila, become a little church of Jesus Christ.

II. The next thing observable in the character of these persons, is, that the Apostle calls them *his helpers in Christ Jesus.*

Convinced of the truth, and feeling the importance of the gospel, they wished its prevalence and success among their perishing fellow mortals. When they looked around on the ignorant Gentiles and deluded Jews, they pitied their deplorable state, rejoiced that the gospel was proclaimed, and desired its universal spread. As Paul was sent to preach the way of salvation, so out of love, not merely to him, but to mankind in general, they became his helpers in Christ Jesus.

There are various ways, in which private Christians may help their minister, and in which these godly persons may be supposed to have helped the Apostle, in the work of Christ.

1. They helped him by their *hospitality.*

For a considerable part of the time that he preached in Corinth, he abode in their house.

Banished from Rome, they had but lately come hither. Their present condition could not be the most easy and plentiful. In the opulent city of Corinth, there were doubtless many more wealthy than they; but none so ready to open their doors to an Apostle of Jesus, who came to bring the gospel of salvation. By industry in their calling, they had acquired not only a competence for themselves,

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an elevation to his spirits, and an ardour to his zeal. It raises his hopes of success among his people, and particularly among the youth.

But if, on the contrary, they treat the preaching of the word with cold indifference, and contemptuous neglect, seldom attending on it, except when the season is remarkably inviting, or the occasion gives an expectation of something new; far from helping, they rather hinder their minister. He can hardly forbear to say to them, "I would, that ye were cold or hot." Their declared indifference to the ministry, leads others, especially the young, to view it as a useless invention, and to regard it rather as matter of amusement, than a mean of salvation.

My brethren, if you expect from your minister no help to *your own* souls—if *your* Christian attainments raise you above such means of edification, as his preaching; yet you will permit him to ask your attendance, that you may be *his helpers* in Christ Jesus—that you may contribute to the efficacy of his preaching among your *children*. He will thank you for this favour; for he would by all means save some. He ardently desires that Christ may be formed in the youth, and that they may grow up in all things into him, who is the head. *They* are not yet superior to religious instruction. You will help them, when you help your minister, by your constant attendance at the sanctuary.

But then let your attendance be grave and devout; and on what you hear, let your remarks be candid and serious. Ludicrous or captious animadversions, defeat the proper influence of the word on youthful minds. What is pertinent to your case, take home to yourselves, and assist your youths in applying what is pertinent to theirs. Retain and improve what is good. If you meet with any thing, which appears otherwise, let prudence point out the proper time and place to mention it.

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Paul greatly valued the prayers of Christians; and, from a persuasion of his continual remembrance in them, was mightily encouraged in his work. He says to the Corinthians, "God has delivered us from death, and we trust he will yet deliver us, you also helping together by prayer for us."—He entreats the brethren, for the Lord Jesus's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that they would "strive together with him in their prayers to God for him, that he might be delivered from them, who believe not; that his own service might be accepted of the saints; that utterance might be given him; and that he might speak the word, as he ought to speak." If the fervent prayers of the righteous avail much, they may, by their prayers, exceedingly help their minister in his work; and while they help him, they may help their own souls, too, and the souls of many around them.

5. The Apostle particularly remarks, that these persons, *for his life, had laid down their own necks, for which service, not only he, but all the churches of the Gentiles, gave them thanks.*

He here refers to some case, in which they had rescued his life with the hazard of their own. What the particular case was, we are not informed; but it was then in the churches a matter of publick notoriety, and general gratitude and praise.

Their motive, in this case, was not a partial affection for Paul, but a regard to the general interest of religion. This Apostle, in preaching the gospel, shewed the same benevolence. He says to the Philippians—*If I be offered on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.* And to the elders of Ephesus—*In every city bonds and afflictions abide me; but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus,*

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To justify the application of such a name, a family must be under wholesome discipline and prudent government. There must be in it order and regularity. Each member must know his own station, and observe his proper place. The heads must preside with wisdom and dignity; and the subordinate members must obey with cheerfulness, and submit with reverence. Stated worship must be maintained, the scriptures read, instructions communicated, reproofs administered, love diffused through all the branches, and peace unite them in one body. Such is the proper state of a church, and such the state of a family which resembles a church. Such then was the household of Aquila, which the Apostle salutes by this honourable name.

A house, in which there is no peace or order; no social worship or religious instruction; but every one walks in his own way, and pursues his own inclination; the heads contend with each other; and the children despise both; the former treat religion with neglect, and the latter grow up in ignorance and vice; such a house is not a church, but a Babel.

We, then, who have the care of families, ought to make them churches. For this end we must dedicate our children to God, and bring them up in his fear, instruct them in the doctrines of the gospel, govern them with wisdom, lead them in prayer, encourage their attendance on the ordinances of the sanctuary, and inculcate on them the necessity of a heart devoted to God.

The Apostle's commendation of the example under consideration, is a severe reproof on those, who call not on God's name, nor train up their children in the way in which they should walk.

The growth and prosperity of the church of Christ, depend much on family religion. As this is attended or neglected, that will increase or decline.

Greater societies are formed from smaller; church- grow out of families; and the spirit and complex- n of the latter will be transfused through the form- .

When family religion sinks into disuse and dis- edit, publick worship will be more and more neg- cted, ordinances will be despised, the sabbath ofaned, or but carelessly observed, and the num- r, or, at least, the proportion of open professors, ill diminish more and more.

But when families become little churches, real cieties of religion; when prayer is maintained, struction communicated, government exercised, d order preserved, according to the commands Christ, then will the young, under these benign fluences, spring up as among the grass, and as illows by the water courses, and will yield the easant fruits of righteousness, as plants which od has nourished. They will come and join emselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant,

SERMON XVII.

Children, in the Temple, praising the Redeemer.

MATTHEW xxi. 15. 16.

And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

THE prophet Zechariah foretold, that *the King of Sion would come to her, meek and lowly, sitting on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass.* In this manner, the evangelist tells us, Jesus once made his publick entry into Jerusalem. "In the eastern countries, riding on horses was anciently reckoned the greatest ostentation of magnificence. It was therefore becoming the meekness of the lowly Jesus, that, in his entry into the capital city, he chose to ride on an ass. At the same time, there was nothing mean or ridiculous in it, asses being the beasts, which the easterns commonly made use of in riding." The particular reason of his riding

to the city, might be the throng, which now, at e time of the passover, attended him; and which ould have much incommoded him, had he walk- l on foot, as usual. Besides; as he was about to erform some mighty works in the city, he might noose, on this occasion, to be distinguished from ie multitude. However, to avoid unnecessary stentation, he rode in the humble manner above- ientioned.

It was become a prevailing opinion, that he was ie Messiah, and would soon take the government ito his hands. Many, probably, expected that he ould do it at this passover. Some therefore spread ieir garments in the way, and others cut down the oughs of trees, and strewed them along the road: kind of honour, which was sometimes paid to ings when they entered into populous cities. When ie front of the procession, which attended Jesus, id reached the descent of the mount of Olives, here the royal city rose to view, they were met by multitude coming from the city to join them

to be healed. The youth, who attended the passover, as they usually did from the age of twelve years, were astonished at the works which he performed. When they observed, how the blind, who had been led groping along, now dismissed their guides, and walked whither they would—how the cripples, who had been laid down at his feet, rose up and walked nimbly away—how the dumb, on a sudden, burst forth into praise; and the deaf, catching the song, joined their joyful voice—they felt the power of conviction, and proclaimed him the promised Messiah.

The scribes and Pharisees, seeing his wonderful works, and hearing the acclamations of the children, were much displeased; but being restrained, by fear of the multitude, they made no violent opposition. They only expostulated with him—*Hearest thou what these say?* Insinuating, perhaps, that the children ascribed to him glories, which he had no right to claim; or that they uttered things which they did not understand. He answered them by a passage from the eighth Psalm. "Have ye never read—*Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained praise?*"

That Psalm was probably composed by David, on the victory which was obtained over the Philistines, when he slew the giant of Gath. And the expression may be intended to celebrate the power of God, in accomplishing so great an event by so feeble an instrument. Or, it may allude to the songs, in which the women, coming out of the cities with their children, celebrated this wonderful victory. By applying to the present case these words of David, Jesus signified, that the meanest of God's works display his power; and as the Father receives praise from the least of his creatures, so the Son disdains not the honours offered him by

tle children. In the present instance, their praise as peculiarly beautiful and pertinent, as it shewed at Christ's miracles were so illustrious, as to rike even youthful minds with wonder and con- ction. The praise of the Redeemer, on this oc- sion, might, with singular propriety, be said, to perfected out of the mouth of babes.

From the passage now illustrated, some instruc- ons may be collected especially pertinent to the oung.

1. We here see, that real piety is not confined men of years, or of learning. It sometimes akes a lovely appearance in children and youth. While the pharisees and doctors of the law re- cted the Redeemer, praise to him was ordained t of the mouth of babes. Those wonderful orks, which the former perversely imputed to the wer of Satan, struck the latter with conviction, at Jesus was the Christ. Those doctrines of ace, which awakened the indignation of the one,

after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; for God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise; the weak things to confound the mighty; and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.

True religion in the heart depends not on superior abilities, but on a teachable and humble spirit. Our Saviour has instructed us, that if we would enter into his kingdom, we must humble ourselves, and become as little children. The Apostles direct us, to receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls; to lay apart all guile and hypocrisy, and, like newborn babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby.

You see, then, my young hearers, the wisdom of an early attention to religion. Certain *natural* qualities, favourable to religion, you have now; but you will not carry them with you through life. In the first stages of youth, there is a desire of knowledge, a sensibility of mind, a modesty and docility of spirit, which you will not retain after you have accustomed yourselves to the ways and manners of the world. When pride and hardness of heart shall have supplanted these natural dispositions; and when the perplexity of worldly cares and designs shall have banished all religious concern, you will, with greater difficulty and reluctance, bow to the gospel of Christ. If, before you can enter into the kingdom of God, you must be brought to the tempers and dispositions of children —must, in a sense, come back to what you are now, Is it not best to enter into the kingdom now, while you are children, and before you have outgrown the dispositions which at present favour your entrance?

Your *natural* humility, tenderness and teachableness, are not real holiness; but they are certainly more favourable than the opposite tempers, to the introduction of real holiness. The scripture represents them so, and urges you to take the benefit of them, while you may.

2. We see that religion, in its main substance, is adapted to the capacity of the young.

The Jewish children were easily convinced, that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah. It required no laboured reasoning, or depth of learning, to see, that no man could speak as he spake, or do the works which he did, except God were with him.

The system of religion contains, indeed, many things above the comprehension, not only of children, but of mortals. These, however, are not the most essential things. What immediately relates to our duty, and concerns our salvation, is level to common capacities. The Apostles, considering themselves as debtors both to the wise and unwise, used great plainness of speech. They wrote to young men and little children, as well as to aged men and fathers; and they wrote with perspicuity.

Think not, then, ye youths, that you may, for the present, postpone religion, as a matter beyond your capacity. In the Saviour's day, there were children, out of whose mouths praise was perfected.

Does not every thing which you see, teach you, that there is a God; that he is powerful, wise and good; and that you are daily dependent on him, and indebted to him? Do you find any difficulty in understanding good and evil, and in determining what you ought to do, and what you ought to avoid?—When you have sinned, and doubtless you know that you sin often, Is it not a plain case, that God is dishonoured and offended, and that you

must, by repentance, apply to him for pardon? The gospel teaches, you that God has sent his Son into the world to redeem sinners, by suffering death for their sins. Is not this an encouragement to your hope, and a motive to your repentance?—When you read the history of your Redeemer's life, and observe the meekness, humility, patience, goodness and benevolence, which appeared in him, Are you not pleased with the example, and convinced that you ought to imitate it?—When you are told, that you have immortal souls, which must live in another world, and be happy or miserable there, according to the course which you now pursue, Are you in doubt to judge what is meant by all this, or what manner of persons you ought to be?

These are the great things, which immediately concern you; and I question not, but you well understand them. I am sure, that by attention, you may understand them. The obligations of religion then lie on you, as well as on others. Think not to excuse yourselves from it, as a matter too high for you. Improve the advantages given you; gain the knowledge which you may, and act according to the knowledge which you have, and you will doubtless meet the approbation of your God.

3. From the example before us, we learn, that great benefit may accrue to youth, from a stated attendance on divine institutions.

At the time of the passover, these children met with Jesus in the temple.

The passover was instituted in commemoration of the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt, and in prefiguration of the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ. One design of this festival was, that when children in time to come should inquire, what was meant by this service, the parents should instruct them, how God, by a mighty hand, saved

his people from bondage. As soon as children arrived to such an age, as to bring an offering in their hands, they were to appear with their parents at the temple, and there to celebrate the feast. Luke tells us, It was the custom of the feast for children to attend it, when they were twelve years old.

The Jews, though much degenerated in our Saviour's time, generally observed the publick forms of religion. They early brought their children to the passover. Happy it was for many of them, that they were brought to *this* passover. Here they met with the Saviour. They saw his works, and heard his words; their hearts were warmed with love to him, and their mouths were filled with his praise. What a loss they might have sustained, had they been absent now! Christ, at appointed seasons, visited the temple. He honoured divine institutions: They who would receive his blessing, must honour them too.

Publick worship is as much an ordinance of God under the gospel, as was the passover under the law.

The example of the Jews, in bringing their children to the temple, reproves the neglect of many Christians. Do you imagine, that your children can receive no benefit from the services of the sanctuary? You know not how early the grace of God may open the heart to attend to the things which are spoken, and to receive the influence of divine truths. By a regular and constant attendance, they will be found in the way of God's blessing. If they have not capacity to follow a train of thoughts through a sermon or prayer, yet their minds may be affected with the general solemnity of the appearance. They will grow up with a sense that there is something important in religion. They will be early habituated to religious order. They will, now and then, imbibe a useful sentiment.

They will gradually increase in knowledge; and, perhaps, some seasonable admonition may leave an abiding impression.

Consider, ye youths, that there is no small hazard in an unnecessary absence from the place of worship, and in a careless behaviour there. You see what certain youths obtained by an attendance at the passover, and what they would have missed, if they had refused to repair to the temple, when Jesus was there, or had been regardless of what they saw and heard. If you desire to know your Saviour, and to receive the blessings of his love, come to the place, where he has appointed to meet you. Do you think lightly of the stated worship of the Lord's day? Let me ask you, Is it not an institution of Christ; an institution, which his disciples observed, and which he himself honoured with his presence?—Is it a light matter to despise the grace, the authority, and the example of your Redeemer?—Do you not believe, that your salvation must come from him; that you must seek it in order to obtain it; and seek it in the way, which he has prescribed? You think, perhaps, that a more private attendance upon him, will be sufficient. This indeed must be done; but leave not the other undone. While you neglect publick means, there is little room to hope for his blessing on private means, and little reason to believe, that you will regard them. Whatever you may pretend, as long as you are indifferent to the publick institutions of Christ, you will pay no great attention to the more private exercises of piety.

4. We are here taught, that the young are under some special obligations to acknowledge and praise the Redeemer. That which was chiefly commended in these Jewish children, was, that they cried in the temple—*Hosanna to the son of Da-*

vid. Their regard to the Saviour, led them openly to confess him in a publick assembly.

As Jesus is the author of salvation to sinners, the mediator through whom they must come to God, so faith in him, love and gratitude to him, and an explicit acknowledgment of him, are essential to real religion. These regards and honours to him, are due no less from the young, than from others.

True religion in you, my children, will operate in pious affections and exercises of heart toward your Redeemer. You are a part of the fallen race, which he came to redeem. You have sinned and come short of the glory of God; and your salvation must come through him. He has expressed a particular tenderness and concern for such as you. He became a child, that he might teach you how children ought to walk, and to please God. When he appeared in public life, he never overlooked those of your age and standing. He gathered the lambs with his arms, and carried them in his bosom. Many of the miracles which he wrought, to confirm the truth of his religion, were in healing the diseases, and relieving the distresses of the young. He directed that children should be brought to him; and those who came he graciously received. He owned little ones as his disciples, and denounced his severest wrath against those who should despise them, or lay stumbling blocks in their way. They had a particular share in his prayers on earth, nor can we think they are forgotten in his intercessions above. Many declarations and promises he has made in their favour; and has solemnly charged, not only parents, but ministers, to feed his lambs. In them he encouraged the small beginnings of faith and piety. He was careful not to overburden the feeble, but to assist their virtuous resolutions. In his last sufferings, he remembered

children, and spake of them with tender compassion. And, What think you?—Do you owe nothing to him?—Is he entitled to no regards and honours from you? This Divine Benefactor had you much on his heart when he came from heaven, when he dwelt on earth, when he suffered on the cross, when he arose and ascended to heaven: He has you on his heart still: And, Will you make him no returns? Give him your hearts, and consecrate to him your lives: He has given *his* life for you. Renounce the vanities and vices of the world: He came to deliver you from this evil world. Confess his name before men: He has not been ashamed to own and commend the youths who believed in him. In a word—by the mercies of Christ I beseech you, that you present yourselves living sacrifices holy and acceptable to him, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds.

We may observe, once more,

5. That youthful piety is peculiarly pleasing to Christ.

When children sung praises in the temple, Jesus vindicated them from the obloquy of the impious scribes, and applauded their faith and devotion, as bringing glory to God. There were multitudes, who, on this occasion, sung the same anthem of praise; but the children he singled out as objects of his special approbation and delight. Piety he loves in all; but in none more than in the young.

Fear not, ye serious youths, that he will despise the day of small things—that he will disdain the praises and prayers offered from your uninstructed tongues. He loves the undissembled language of the penitent and believing heart, however incorrect and imperfect may be the language of the lips. He observes your honest resolutions, hears your hum-

e prayers, and will assist your virtuous endeav-
urs. He will not quench, but fan the smoking
ax. He will not break, but support the bruised
eed. The good work which he begins, he is
eady to complete.

Be encouraged, then, to commit your souls to
e care, and to devote your lives to the service, of
our Redeemer. When you see how pleased he is
ith your obedience, Will you deny it to him?—
When you observe how he delights in your praise,
Will you be silent? The prophet says—*He shall*
e of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. Great
ere his sufferings for the sins of men. But when
e sees the success of them in bringing sinners to
pentance and salvation, then he is satisfied; and
eculiarly so, when such as you are drawn to him.
e has made a general declaration, that those who
me to him, he will not cast out; and a particular
omise, that they who seek him early shall find
m.

Go, my children, and seek him now. But think

and fortitude, that you may cheerfully meet every trial appointed you. He considers the weakness of your age, and the feebleness of your first virtuous purposes. He knows your state, and remembers that you are babes. Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he will strengthen your heart. He giveth power to the faint; and to them who have no might, he increaseth strength. When the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, they who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.

SERMON XVIII.

The Necessity of early Religion.

ECCLESIASTES xii, 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

THIS advice of the preacher supposes the

As creation is the first and most obvious evidence, which they can have of the existence of the Deity, so their first apprehensions of him, and regards to him, are in this character. In calling them therefore to early religion, Solomon, with great propriety, exhorts them to *remember their Creator.*

When they begin to reflect, they find that they can look back but a few months or years; that the other day they had not even an existence; that very lately they rose from nothing, and became such beings as they are. Hence they know, that there must be some invisible power, which made them.

They find themselves placed in a spacious world, and surrounded with a thousand wonders; they behold the heavenly curtains stretched over their heads, and beautified with innumerable lights; they see the earth peopled with various kinds of creatures, and spread with various bounties, for their supply; they observe the rolling seasons, and the daily changes of light and darkness. From hence they have sensible evidence, that there is a superior Being, who made and upholds them, and all things around them. If they naturally conclude, that *every house is builded by some man;* the conclusion is as natural, that *he who built all things, is God.*

From the inward powers of perception, thought and reason, they know that the Creator must be perfectly wise. For he who formed the eye, Shall not he see?—He who planted the ear, Shall not he hear?—He who teacheth man knowledge, Shall not he know?

When they consider the grandeur of the world, the mighty effects produced before their eyes, and the bountiful supplies afforded to all living creatures, they are at once convinced, that their Creator is infinite in power, rich in goodness, and present in every place.

These sentiments of the Deity easily arise in the ind of every serious and contemplative youth. the first openings of reason, the young are more ven to inquisitive speculation than perhaps some e apt to imagine. The new objects which con- nually meet their eyes, awaken thought and con- mplation in their minds; and if, in this early ge, proper assistance and encouragement were orded them, they would make easy progress in e knowledge of moral and divine things, and eply imbibe those sentiments of virtue and re- gion, which might abide with them through life, d preserve them from the fatal influence of tempt- ion and vice.

We may observe,

II. Solomon here expresses the piety of the ung by their *remembering their Creator.*

It is usual in scripture to express the whole of ligion by some leading temper or principle; as e knowledge of God, faith in him, love to him,

and produce a correspondent life of humble obedience.

Remembrance is not the learning of something new, but the recollection and retention of something already known. The young are here supposed to have a knowledge of their Creator; to have attended to the evidences of his existence; and to have gained a general acquaintance with his character and will; and they are directed immediately to apply their knowledge to the purpose of real, practical piety.

This is, then, the spirit and meaning of Solomon's address.

"O youth, thou knowest, that there is a God, who made thee, and who created the world, in which thou art placed. And, Wilt thou live unmindful of him? Often consider, what a being he is. Remember that he is a being of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; that he is always present with thee, observing all thy thoughts, words, and actions, and that he will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing. Set him always before thine eyes, act under a sense of his presence, call upon him for all that thou needest, give him thanks for all that thou enjoyest, acknowledge him in all thy ways, approve thyself to him in all that thou dost, and seek his favour with thy whole heart."

We may observe,

III. Solomon recommends to the young a *direct* and *immediate* application to religion. "Remember *now* thy creator."

There are few, perhaps, but who intend to devote themselves to God. The young intend to serve him in their youth. Though they procrastinate religion today, and think they may safely do the same tomorrow, yet they mean not to neglect it through all the period of their youth. They have often been

ld, and they partly believe, that youth is the most vourable season to begin so great a work. They now, that they are commanded to engage in it; nd they would not *wholly* disobey. But consider, ny friends, the same command, which enjoins you o remember God *in your youth*, enjoins you to remember him *now*. What part of youth you will ke for remembering God, is no more at your option, than what part of life you will take. You are s expressly required to serve God in youth, as to erve him at all; and to serve him now, as to serve im in youth. You have no more liberty to postone religion to the last stage of youth, than to the st hour of life.

Allow me then to inculcate upon you the necessi- of early religion, and your obligation to apply ourselves to it immediately, and without delay.

1. Let us resume the thought just now suggested, that this is the *express command* of your Creator.

in the days of your youth. Begin a religious life with the first opening of your reason. Devote to God your best days, the flower of your strength. Is there any room for evasion?—Is there any subterfuge by which you can withdraw yourselves from the authority of so express a command? So long as you neglect religion, you live in plain disobedience, not only to the command, which enjoins religion on all men, but to that also which enjoins it distinctly and explicitly on you. And if repentance must respect all known sin, it must whenever it takes place, particularly respect this youthful delay of repentance. Paul laments, that he was born out of due time. He honours those who were in Christ before him.

2. To convince you farther of the necessity of youthful religion, I would remind you of the means which God has required others to use with you for this purpose.

Your Creator has brought you into existence in a manner favourable to your early nurture and education. He has placed you under the care of those who naturally feel for your welfare. He has, in most express terms, enjoined on them an attention to your moral conduct and religious improvement. As you advance from childhood to youth, you become entitled to more publick instructions. The ministers of religion are to consider you as a part of their charge. While they intreat the aged to be grave, temperate, sober, and sound in faith, they are to exhort the young to be soberminded.

If youthful religion were of little importance, such orders would never have been given. If you had a right to live in the neglect of religion, there could be no reason, why they who go before you, should teach you knowledge, make you to understand doctrine, and give you line upon line, and precept upon precept. The success of their la-

ours depends on your concurrence. Obstinacy d perverseness in you, will defeat their wisest and est endeavours. If they must instruct, warn and prove, you must hear, learn and obey. If they e to watch over you, you are to watch over your- lves. If they are to commend you to the grace of od, you are to seek unto God betimes. Every recept which you find in the Bible, requiring oth- s to consult your spiritual interest, is an admoni- on to you of the necessity of early religion, and call to remember your Creator in the days of your outh.

3. The importance of youthful religion farther ppears in the particular promises of grace, which od has made to the young.

The gospel, which teaches us our native deprav- , and the necessity of a moral change in our tem- rs, teaches us also, that to effect this change a vine influence is necessary. Sinners are indeed quired to make them a new heart. But whatev-

ever he sends his word, he sends the influence of his spirit to accompany it. The gospel is called the ministration of the spirit; and men are said to receive the spirit in the hearing of faith. This gracious influence is especially promised and vouchsafed to the young. This is God's promise to his covenant people—*I will pour my spirit on thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring.* There is undoubtedly a time, when the spirit of grace strives with them, to awaken serious sentiments, convictions, and resolutions, and to excite their attention to their immortal interest. He may strive with sinners in a more advanced age: But in youth he fails not to strive often and earnestly. There are some, whom God gives over to a reprobate mind. But these are such as have rebelled and vexed the Holy Spirit. There are some, from whom the things of their peace are hidden. But there was first a day of visitation.

Remember, my young friends, the peculiar advantages which attend this early period of your life. You not only enjoy the external means of religion, but in addition to these, there are some attendant influences of the spirit, of which you are the subjects. And let me ask you, Have you not experienced them?—Can you not recollect some sensible convictions of conscience—some deep remorse for your youthful follies—some sober resolutions for a virtuous life, which have been excited in your attendance on the appointed means of religion?—Are not these the fruits of that promise of the spirit, which God has made to the young? This is the voice of divine wisdom; and it is directed particularly to the young—*If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her, as for hidden treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. Turn ye*

my reproof; behold, I will pour out my spirit un-
you.

How precious is this opportunity! You have not
ly the means of religion in common with others;
t calls and encouragements peculiar to yourselves.
y not, There is nothing, which you can do. Im-
tent you are in yourselves. But you are not left
yourselves. Under the instructions of the word,
d the strivings of the spirit, there is something
hich you may do. Imagine not that all your pray-
s and endeavours are abomination to God. Those
ayers and endeavours, to which you are excited
the convictions and strivings of the spirit of God,
e not to be called by this name. God does not
hor the work of his own spirit. I beseech you,
glect not this season. When will you find anoth-
as good? You may, perhaps, still enjoy some
the same means; but you will not enjoy them all.
arental instructions, admonitions, and restraints,
ll soon cease. You will gradually out grow your

You cannot possibly get forward to mature age, in a state of impenitence, without aggravated guilt. The guilt of abusing youthful advantages, and of opposing the spirit of God, will pursue you through all the stages of an ungodly life. If you believe that, in the work of your salvation, you are dependent on the grace of God, attend to it at this time, when you have the express offers of his grace. You know not, but when this season is past, his grace may be forever withdrawn.

4. The various contingences, which attend futurity, prove the necessity of early religion.

If religion is necessary to your eternal happiness, it demands your immediate attention. Rash adventures in matters of everlasting importance, ought never to be made. The frailty and uncertainty of human life, are plain to your observation, and ought to be familiar to your thoughts. The continuance of reason depends on God's good pleasure; not on your intentions. What changes of condition await you, and how soon you may be placed beyond the enjoyment of the means of salvation, you know not. Nor can you tell what temptations and intices ments may meet you, when you step forward on the stage, mingle in the affairs, and associate with the men of the world. If the principles of virtue are not early fixed in your hearts, the dangers before you may be fatal. There is such a thing as the final withdrawment of God's grace, and a heart hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. We hope this not to be the case of the young. But the highminded and presumptuous youth, knows not how soon it may be his case.

You see then, that you have no security of any opportunity but the present. All before you is darkness and uncertainty. If you consider religion as necessary, it is your wisdom to engage in it immediately. Remember now your Creator, before

e evil day comes. Put not far from you this evil ay. Give glory to God, before he cause darkness, nd before your feet stumble on the dark moun- ins; lest, while you look for light, it be turned to the shadow of death.

5. Besides those solemn arguments, which are ta- en from another world, the scripture often urges outh to early religion by arguments taken from this orld; which, though far less important in them- lves, are adapted to influence tender minds just o- ening to worldly prospects.

Come, ye children, says David, *hearken unto me, nd I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What an is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, at he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, nd thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, nddo good; seek peace and pursue it.* In the writings f Solomon similar observations often occur

manners, though social, were strictly chaste and pure—who had prudence to decline the known occasions of evil, resolution to withstand a bold temptation, and fortitude to reject a wicked inticement—who could, on proper occasions, mingle with his youthful companions, and yet have no fellowship with their unfruitful works, but rather reprove them—whose governing aim was to act right, without the vanity of human applause—and who, while he maintained a virtuous character, ever preserved a modesty and humility becoming his age?—Did you ever see such a youth? Tell me, if you did not esteem him; if you did not covet his reputation, and almost envy his happiness. Have you ever seen a contrary character? and, Did you not despise and condemn it? Believe then, that the virtuous youth has favour and good understanding in the sight of God and men.

As you are rational beings, you have a part to act in the world. You are to be members of society, and to take a share in the common concerns of human life. It is not your wish, nor was it the Creator's design, that you should pass through life solitary and unconnected. No man lives merely to himself. Early piety will lay a foundation for your future dignity and usefulness. Religion has something to do in every station, and in every calling; nor can you properly fill your circle without it. Whatever may be the business assigned you, truth, justice and benevolence, are the principles which must govern you. These you ought early to possess, that you may always feel their influence. A habit of duplicity, fraud and unrighteousness, formed in youth, will operate in the concerns of manhood, and soon plunge you into infamy and ruin. If you now banish religion from your thoughts, you banish all reasonable hope of worldly reputation and prosperity, as well as of future glory.

Think not, however, that the chief reward of
ty is in this world. It will indeed bring you
ny blessings, and secure you from *many* evils :
still you are in a world of mortality and change.
Disappointment, pain, sickness, sorrow and death,
ait the saint in common with others : But he has
solations, to which the guilty can make no
m. Peace of conscience, and hope in God, a
suasion that all things are meant for his good,
the prospect of immortal glory beyond the
ve, are comforts which delight his soul in the
of affliction and in the approach of death.
ce no man can escape these events, it is ev-
man's wisdom to be prepared for them. Reli-
n is the only preparation ; religion in youth is
sonable preparation. If it would be desirable
escape afflictions ; next to this, at least, it is de-
able to be prepared for them. Your preparation
not be too soon, for the necessity may be near.
You will, I presume, set out in life with a desire

willing mind. If you seek him, he will be found of you: if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.

However indifferent this advice may seem now, the day is coming, when you will feel its importance. As you are now climbing the hill, and rising to maturity, worldly prospects open and expand to your view, and you promise yourselves a delightful and prosperous journey through life. But, believe me, you will soon pass the summit, and find yourselves treading the downward path: Then your worldly prospects will shorten and shorten, and the shadows will stretch over your heads; and when you sink into the vale of old age, your worldly prospects will disappear. Happy then, if you have better prospects in God.

Hear now the conclusion of the whole matter. *Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

SERMON XIX.

The Youth assisted in forming his religious Sentiments.

PROVERBS, ii. 10, 11, 12.

When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleas-

The young, however, are to consider, that there are instructions, which cause to err from the words of knowledge. Solomon therefore urges the necessity of *discretion and understanding, to deliver them from the way of the evil man, the man who speaketh froward things; who leaves the paths of uprightness to walk in the way of darkness; who rejoices to do evil, and delights in the frowardness of the wicked.*

The serious youth will then inquire, How he shall distinguish between truth and errour; between the path of uprightness and the way of darkness?

My design is to answer this inquiry. And I solicit the attention of my young hearers, while I lay before them some plain rules for forming just opinions in matters of religion.

I. Let your mind be impressed with this sentiment, that there is such a thing as religion; and that it is of *serious importance.*

While you are inquiring what religion is, resolve to embrace it, and to walk agreeably to it. *Wisdom must enter into your heart; knowledge must be pleasant to your soul, that it may deliver you from the way of the evil man.*

If you consider religion merely as a matter of speculation and amusement, you will fall in with those opinions and usages, which best please your humour and inclination; or which are recommended by your favourite company and connexions; or rather, you will receive no opinions heartily but those which relax the obligations of virtue.

When you see men trifling in religion, turning with every tide, and veering about with every wind of doctrine; when you hear them talk lightly about the concerns of futurity, and arguing in support of notions which favour a licentious life; when you observe them pleased in throwing off those principles which are the greatest restraints

om vice, and the most powerful incentives to vir-
e; whatever degree of ingenuity, and whatever
ste for reading they discover, you may certainly
nclude, that they are not inquiring after truth;
t are contriving to satisfy their conscience in a
urse which they are determined to pursue.

The reason why many run into errours in reli-
on, is, because knowledge is not pleasant to their
uls; the love of wisdom has never entered into
eir hearts.

Religion, in its great and essential truths and
ties, is so plain, that to understand it, there
eds only serious inquiry, guided by a sense of its
portance.

Look around, and you will see that there is a
eity daily present with you and working in your
ght. Look into yourselves, and you will per-
ive that you are free and accountable creatures.
ou must then be under some obligations to this

ful, as he is merciful; and perfect, as he is perfect. You must then, in all your religious inquiries, keep the divine character in your mind, and admit for truth nothing which evidently contradicts it, or reflects dishonour upon it.

Purity in heart, rectitude in your intentions, sincerity in your professions and in all your language, justice and probity in your actions, mercy to the unhappy, forgiveness and love of enemies, and good will to all men, are the principal lineaments and features in a religion which God will accept. Other things are necessary as aids to religion; but these must always be regarded as the great and weighty matters.

III. To judge what religion is, you must always consider, that it is a *rational thing*.

As it is appointed by a God of wisdom, you may conclude, that it bears obvious marks of his wisdom; and as it is designed for intelligent creatures, you may be assured, that its doctrines and precepts are adapted to your understanding, judgment and conscience. There may be doctrines in it beyond the discovery, and above the comprehension of your reason; for even in the natural world you meet with a thousand unsearchable wonders; but the doctrines of religion, when they are once discovered, and when the evidence of them is stated, will appear reasonable to be believed, and plain, as far as they concern your practice.

Religion, indeed, consists much in the exercise of the *affections*; as fear and hope, love and hatred, sorrow and joy. But these affections can no farther bear a part in religion, than they are under the direction of the understanding. They must not be the fortuitous sallies of a blind and heated imagination; but the calm and rational exercises of an enlightened and well instructed mind.

The religious man knows why he is affected in such a manner, why he hopes or fears, why he loves these objects and hates the contrary, why he is grieved, and why he rejoices. Farther than there is a *reason* for these affections, there can be no *religion* in them.

It is possible, that one may be under painful apprehensions of future punishment, and yet have no disposition to repentance. If his terrours arise, he knows not why, or from what; if he has no idea, what it is that exposes men to the wrath of God, and no sense of any thing in himself, that deserves it, there is nothing in all his terrours, which partakes of the nature of religious conviction, or that leads to real amendment. True conviction is a knowledge of sin by the law, a knowledge of one's own sin by comparing himself with the law, and a knowledge of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, as a transgression of the law.

Religious *hope* is not a blind and hasty confidence of future happiness, but a rational and scriptural expectation of it, founded in the gracious promises of God, and appropriating these promises by a sincere and deliberate submission to the terms of them.

The pious man *loves God*, from a believing view of him, as a holy, just, good, and excellent being; and he *hates sin* from a sense of its contrariety to the will and character of God, and its inconsistency with his own perfection and happiness.

Holy *joy* springs not from an accidental flow of the animal spirits, but from an experimental evidence of our sincerity, and of our consequent interest in the favour of God.

True religion is *devout*, but not *superstitious*. It will excite you to frequent converse with God, and to a diligent attendance on all the instituted forms of worship; but it will not allow you to rest

in these exercises, as the great, or the only things required. It will regard them, not as substitutes for holiness, or compensations for the want of it, but as means to promote the exercise of it in the heart, and the practice of it in the life. To attend on the institutions of God with engagedness of affection, and purity of intention, is *devotion.* To lay the principal weight on the ceremonial part of religion, or on devices and inventions of men, is *superstition.*

True religion is *affectionate*, but not *enthusiastick.*

It is affectionate or sensible, in opposition to *stupidity;* but not wild in opposition to reason. There may be a rational assent to the truths of religion, without a heart to feel them, or be governed by them. This is *stupidity.* True faith is accompanied with a sense of the importance of the things believed. Where this sensible belief takes place, there will be virtuous resolutions and holy affections—there will be sorrow for sin, hope in God's mercy, gratitude to the Redeemer, admiring thoughts of the gospel salvation, earnest desires of an interest in it, and humble joy in the evidences of a title to it. These are rational exercises of mind, and they belong to true piety.

But then to make the *whole* of religion consist in inward emotions, to consider the occasional flow of passion as a sign of grace in the heart, to depend on our lively feelings as indications of the divine will, to determine our duty, or our state, by impressions made on the imagination, and implicitly to follow every powerful impulse, or sudden suggestion, in opposition to the dictates of reason and the voice of revelation, this is to supplant religion by *enthusiasm.*

Though every degree of this spirit may not be

consistent with integrity, yet the full dominion of will exclude religion.

Bear it then in your minds, that religion is a *asonable service.* Employ your reason in judg- g what is right; and, that you may be furnished r judging, apply to the word of revelation.

IV. Religion must be a work suited to the *na- re* and *condition* of man.

God treats all creatures as they are; and requires them according to what he has given them. He quires not of men all the same things which he xacts of angels; nor would he tolerate in angels e same things which he pardons in men; for he nows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.

Man consists of a material body, and a rational ind. While he dwells in the body, he must take re of its concerns, and provide for its support. is religion therefore cannot *wholly* consist in the iritual exercises of angels, or in such a refine- ent and elevation of spirit, as would entirely de-

introduce and improve virtuous principles, restrain the passions, and prevent them from enslaving the nobler powers.

The duties relating to the body, and the mind, though different in themselves, are nearly connected, and mutually subservient. You cannot complain, that worldly business calls you off from the care of your souls; nor under pretence of engagedness in your salvation, can you excuse your neglect of secular duties. Every duty claims its place, and an attention to each, in its place, will facilitate the practice of the others.

You ought farther to consider your *moral condition.*

You are fallen creatures; but placed under the hopes of pardon and life through a Mediator. And religion includes in it such tempers and duties, as correspond with such a condition.

The gospel plan is founded on the supposition of a fact, which experience and observation cannot but acknowledge; that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Revelation teaches us, that God, in compassion to our apostate race, has sent into the world a glorious Saviour, who, by assuming our nature, and suffering in our place, has opened a way for the exercise of pardoning mercy to repenting sinners.

The religion of an innocent creature consists in a continued obedience to the will of God. But the religion of a sinner must begin in repentance of sin, and return to God. Your first care, then, must be to know yourselves, and to obtain God's grace for the renovation of your souls, and his mercy for the remission of your sins. Your acceptable application to God can be only in the name of the Saviour, whom he has ordained, and by an attendance on the means, which he has appointed. You must compare yourselves with his word, encourage serious

nvictions and virtuous resolutions, shun known
mptations and dangerous connexions, attend on
e institutions of the gospel, frame your ways to
rn to the Lord, and seek his favour, until you
nd.

Viewing yourselves as fallen creatures, you will
e these to be reasonable exercises, and necessari-
belonging to religion. Every thing, therefore,
hich tends to pride and selfconfidence, and which
courages boasting and ostentation, is contrary to
e nature of true religion. This will always be
odest and humble. It will dispose you to judge
yourselves with caution; to judge of others
ith candour.

V. You must always remember that religion is
benevolent and *useful* thing; and that, wherever
takes place, it makes men *better* than they were
fore.

It consists not in empty noise and vain show; but
solid virtue and substantial goodness. That con-

the pattern of his Saviour, benevolent to his fellow men, humble in his temper and manners, peaceable in society, just in his treatment of all, condescending in cases of difference, strict in the government of himself, patient in adversity, and attentive to his duty in all conditions and relations of life. When you see such a character, you may believe, that religion is there. When you find this to be your character, you may believe, that wisdom has entered into your heart.

You are to distinguish between truth and errour, and to embrace the one and reject the other. But never lay great weight on things, which have no relation to practice; nor make light of great things, which are immediately connected with duty.

If you see a man meek, humble, peaceable, sober and benevolent, careful to practise piety himself, and to promote it among others, you may think him religious, though you suppose him to have adopted some groundless opinions. If you see one contentious about religion, condemning all who think not as he does, busy in sowing the seeds of discord, and in causing divisions among brethren, and more zealous to make proselytes to his own party and opinion, than to make good men of his proselytes; whatever you may think of his heart, you will at least conclude, that his zeal is not according to knowledge.

Judge then of the truth and importance of doctrines by their practical tendency and observable effects. If an opinion is proposed to you, inquire, what influence it would naturally have. Would it awaken in you a more serious concern about futurity, give you a deeper sense and stronger abhorrence of sin, make you more careful in duty, and more watchful against temptations?—Or, on the other hand, Would it render you more thoughtless and secure, more pliant to the customs of the world,

d more regardless of moral obligations?—An nest answer to these inquiries will determine the nth and importance of most doctrines, concern- g which any doubts may arise. For as the design d tendency of the gospel is to make men better, , if any doctrine has a contrary influence, you ay conclude, either that it is not a doctrine of the spel, or that it meets with a temper exceedingly rverse.

VI. Judge of things doubtful *by things which are lain.*

The great precepts and the leading doctrines of evelation are easy to be understood.—*The scrip- res are given by inspiration of God, and are prof- able for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruc- n in righteousness; and they are able to furnish* t only *the man of God*, but the *pious youth, unto ery good work.* Timothy, *from a child, under- od the holy scriptures. The way of holiness is high way*, a path so plainly drawn in the chart of

When you feel a disposition to receive, or to reject the proposed advice, examine what is your view and design. Is it that you may stand approved to God? or, That you may gratify some humour and passion of your own? If you reject it, ask yourselves, whether you are rationally convinced, that it is wrong in itself, injurious to your character, and dangerous to your virtue; or whether you only view it as contradicting some favourite habit, pleasure or pursuit. If your inclination is to adopt the instruction given you, examine from whence this inclination arises. Does it arise from conviction of the truth and importance of the matter in question? or, From its agreeableness to that manner of life, which you choose to follow, and from its tendency to secure you against the just reproaches of your conscience?

In forming your judgment concerning religious truth, and moral obligation, never suffer lust, passion, prejudice, or social comexion, to have any influence. Examine and decide calmly and dispassionately. Consider, what you approve, and what you condemn in others—what advice, in a serious hour, you would give to a friend—if you were a parent, what counsel and instruction you would inculcate on a son or daughter, whose reputation and happiness you was anxious to promote—suppose yourself near the closing scene, and think, what you would approve or condemn in so solemn a period. Judge in this manner, and you will seldom judge wrong. A judgment and resolution, formed with these cautions, you may venture to follow. They will not lead you astray.

I would not forget to recommend, nor should you neglect to maintain a continual intercourse with your Maker.

As religion is the obligation, which you are under to him, solicit his grace to lead you into just

ntiments of it, and to impress these sentiments eeply on your hearts. Aware of the dangers hich attend the present stage of your life—aware the seductions of a deceitful heart, and the mptations of a guilty world, seek wisdom from e Father of light—seek direction from him, who aches the meek his way—seek protection from m, whose eye beholds the state, and whose ear tends the prayer of the humble.

If thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy ice for understanding; if thou seekest her as sil- r, and searchest for her as for hidden treasures, then alt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find e knowledge of God. For God giveth wisdom; out his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding; layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous; he is buckler to them who walk uprightly; he keepeth e path of judgment, and preserveth the way of e saints. Thus shalt thou understand righteousness, dgment and equity; yea, and every good path.

SERMON XX.

Samson shorn of his Locks.

JUDGES, xvi. 20.

The Philistines be upon thee Samson.

AND, What then?—What can the Philistines do to Samson, the man of invincible strength? He has proved himself more than a match for a thousand of them. He once entered alone into one of their principal cities, slew thirty men, took their spoil, and went off in safety. He afterward, at another place, spread among them a more extensive slaughter. He, with only the contemptible weapon of a jaw bone, smote to the ground a thousand men, and laid them heaps upon heaps. The gate posts of Gaza he plucked up with his hands, and carried them off on his shoulders, with the gate, bar and all. Consenting to be bound with strong cords, green withes, and new ropes, in succession, he snapped them asunder, as a thread of tow; and when his enemies, thinking him in their power, shouted against him, he rose, and fell upon them with prodigious havock. And, What can they do to him now?

Alas! Samson has slept in the lap of a harlot, and his strength is gone! His enemies now seize

n, put out his eyes, bind him in fetters of brass, d make him grind in the prison. Fatal change! he dismal effect of breaking the sacred vow of azariteship, and yielding to the power of lust.

Samson's prodigious strength was not a natural dowment, always at his own command: It was immediate gift, vouchsafed on special occasions, d, on those occasions, obtained by prayer to God, his exertions, it is said, *The spirit of God came pon him.* When his strength failed, it is said, *he Lord departed from him.*

From his infancy, he had been dedicated to God, a Nazarite forever. He was separated to the service of God, under an obligation to abstain from ine, and every sensual indulgence, which might, any degree, unfit him for the service to which he as devoted. He was raised up to be the deliverer the Jews, now under the oppression of the Philisnes, and to be their chief magistrate in the admintration of their civil government. That he might

servance of his vow, there is no reason to conclude that the same effect would have ensued.

Whether Samson was a man of real piety, is a question which the history of his life seems not clearly to decide. The strongest argument in his favour, is the honour done him by the Apostle to the Hebrews, who has given him a place in his list of believers.

However this may be, he was evidently a man of a mixed character.

He believed in the true God, regarded his governing providence, often addressed him in prayer, received communications of supernatural strength; which he sensibly acknowledged, and, until he was overcome by the inticements of an artful woman, he carefully preserved the external token of his separation to the service of God. But, on the other hand, we find him, early in life, seeking a marriage contrary to the advice of his parents, and to the law of his God. This marriage is indeed said to be of the Lord; not commanded, but permitted of the Lord in his wise providence; but, though God was wise in his permission, Samson was not wise in his choice. Afterward we find him in the company of a known prostitute, yielding to female charms, making and attending festivals, in which he would naturally meet with temptations to violate his vow of abstinence from wine. And it is probable, that he at length fell under the power of a depraved appetite; for that he should sleep so soundly, as not to be awakened by the operation of the razor on his head, can hardly be accounted for, but by supposing a degree of inebriation, which Josephus affirms to have been the case.

These stains we discover in his character; not to mention his last act, which perhaps may be justified on the principle of regard to the liberties of his country; for doubtless there are cases, in which

n may expose themselves to probable, if not to
rtain death, for the general safety of their nation.
But, though we see in this hero, great and inex-
sable faults, still it is to be remembered, that,
ile he lay in confinement, he had time for reflection
d repentance. And the return of his strength,
th the future growth of his hair, affords a proba-
e argument of the sincerity of his humiliation, in
at painful period.

But whatever may be his religious character, the
rours of his life, and the calamities which they
ought on him, will suggest to us some useful
rnings and instructions.

By a conduct inconsistent with his solemn dedi-
tion to God, he lost his strength; not only the
ength of his body, but, which was of more im-
rtance, the strength of his mind, and of his vir-
e; and suddenly, in the torpor of an artificial
ep, he fell under the power of his enemies. He
down a freeman, and awoke a captive and a

obliged his parents to set him apart in this character."

It is well answered. Remember, too, God requires the Christian parent to bring up his children in the knowledge and practice of the religion of the gospel; and to make an early dedication of them to him, in a particular instituted form, as an acknowledgment of his obligation thus to educate them; and as a token of their future obligation, to walk worthy of their Christian education. To ask then, how a parent's act binds his children, is only to ask, How they are bound by the command of God? A question which surely needs no answer.

If you have been dedicated to God, it is because you are bound to live to him. Your obligation to virtue does not originate from your baptism; but the reason of your baptism is founded in your obligation to virtue. If you live in opposition to the will of God, you contradict the great design, for which you have been consecrated to him.

Samson was much more concerned to keep the *token* of his Nazaritism, than to observe the *duties* of it. He never voluntarily parted with his locks: but he often violated that purity of life, to which his parents had consecrated him, and which his locks denoted. An inconsistency this, which is not uncommon. Few would, in a formal manner, renounce their baptism; but thousands live contrary to it. While they choose to be considered in the character of baptised Christians, in the character of disciples of Christ, whose name has been called on them, and on whose name they call, they indulge those corruptions of heart, and impurities of life, which his gospel expressly forbids. But, Will their baptism save them, while in works they deny it? It verily profiteth, if they obey the gospel. Otherwise, in effect, it becomes no baptism. He is not a Christian, who is only one outwardly,

name and form. He is a Christian, who is one wardly, in heart and spirit, whose praise is not of en, but of God.

The parent is solicitous, that his children should baptised, and visibly introduced into the church d kingdom of Christ. But if he is not solicit- s to furnish their minds with religious knowledge, d form their lives to virtuous manners, he is no ore consistent with himself, than Samson's pa- nts would have been, to have consecrated him as Nazarite, and then fed him with wine, and cut off s hair.

II. We see in the case of Samson, the unhappy fects of sensuality.

By the law of Nazaritism, he was bound to spe- al purity of life: From this purity he early began depart: The consequence was, he fell into mptation and a snare, and involved himself in isery and ruin.

the soul, and drown men in destruction and wretchedness.

Samson, long celebrated for his singular strength and courage, sunk, at last, by his criminal indulgence, into the most despicable weakness of mind, as well as body, and fell an impotent captive into the hands of his enemies: And they, who once trembled at his arm, now triumphed in his weakness.

See the man, who rent a lion, as he would a kid, who plucked up the gates of Gaza, who, submitting to be bound with cords, burst them, when his enemies shouted, and, with a contemptible weapon, spread slaughter among them at his pleasure; see him now listening to the enticements of a lewd enchantress, betraying to her the most important secrets of his soul, yielding himself to her power, when she had given him full reason to distrust her fidelity; and thus deprived of his strength, and made the sport of his inveterate foes. Alluding to his catastrophe, Solomon says, "Hearken to me, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister, and call understanding thy kinswoman, that they may keep thee from the stranger who flattereth with her words. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths; for she hath cast down many wounded; many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."

In language equally strong and expressive, he warns the youth of the fatal effects of intemperance. "Be not among wine bibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh; for so shalt thou come to poverty, and be clothed with rags. Thou shalt have woe, disease, sorrow, contention, and wounds without cause, thine heart shall utter perverse things, thou shalt be as he who lieth down in the midst of the

n, or sleepeth on the top of a mast. They have aten me,' shalt thou say, and I felt it not: When all I awake? I will seek it yet again."

III. The case of Samson shews us the fatal consequences of criminal connexions.

From this cause the errours and calamities of his e took their rise. Our virtue, honour and happiness depend on nothing more, than the charac- of the friends whom we choose, and the compa- which we keep. Sensible of this, David resolv-, that he would say to evil doers, Depart from e; and would be the companion of them who ared God, and observed his commandments.

The youth, who has enjoyed the benefit of a rtuous education, will form some virtuous reso- ions. While he hears parental instruction, or ile he indulges his serious thoughts in solitude, feels these resolutions operating powerfully in s mind. He thinks he shall easily retain them. hen first he happens into licentious company, the

sensibly, he is drawn off from the virtuous course, which it was his early resolution to pursue.

The youth, who has not wisdom to shun a vicious connexion, has seldom resolution enough to withstand the temptations which attend it. Though he may carry a good resolution into bad company, he will hardly be able to bring it off entire and unbroken. The first step to security, is to retreat from the path of danger. They who deliberately enter upon it, whatever good resolutions they form, are usually beguiled along, until they have advanced so far, and find their way so much embarrassed, that they have but little heart to return. "Hear, O my son," says Solomon, "and receive my commandments, and the years of thy life shall be many. I have taught thee in the way of wisdom, and led thee in right paths. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; when thou runnest, thy feet shall not stumble. Enter not into the path of the wicked, go not in the way of evil men; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

IV. We see the meanness of vice, and in what a despicable light it places the man who yields to it.

While Samson, with the character of the hero, preserved that of the Nazarite; and employed his great strength in vindicating the liberty of his country, and chastising the insolence of her enemies, we view him with esteem and admiration. But when we see this mighty man sinking away into the softness of effeminacy, yielding himself a slave to lust and appetite, and putting that strength which was the gift of God, unto the hands of one, whose only aim was to betray it to the common enemy; when we see him shorn of his locks, and led off blind and impotent, what different sentiments we feel! If we behold him with pity, it is pity mixed with contempt.

Similar spectacles, however, are too often to be
en. If the man of superiour powers, and a vir-
ous education, yields himself a slave to passion
d appetite; if by criminal indulgences of any
nd, he debilitates his body and beclouds his in-
llect, destroys his health and wastes his sub-
nce, and, from the dignity of a man, sinks down
the meanness of an animal, he is like Samson
orn of his locks, while he slept in the arms of
easure. If ever he awakes, he will feel with
ame and regret the disgraceful change.

The youth, who aims at honour and reputation,
ust maintain his virtue. Let not mercy and truth,
rity and sobriety, ever forsake thee; bind them
out thy neck, write them on the table of thine
art, take them with thee in all thy walks, make
em thy companions in all companies, and thy
ards in all temptations; so shalt thou find favour
d good understanding in the sight of God and
en.

The man of strictest virtue, is, in this state, liable to adversity; nor can we, from the calamities which a man suffers, conclude him to be a transgressor. But when calamities, by direct and natural steps, follow after manifest iniquity, we must view the former as the proper fruit and punishment of the latter.

Though rewards and punishments are not exactly and constantly dispensed here, yet there are many cases, in which they take place in a degree, to awaken men's attention to the different consequences of virtue and vice, and to convince them that righteousness tends to life, and that he who pursues evil, pursues it to his death.

When they see the connexion between sin and punishment here, they ought to extend their views to the world of retribution, where, on the children of disobedience, the wrath of God will come to the uttermost. He makes their sins to fall upon them in this world, to remind them, that these sins, indulged until death, will find them out in the next. If there is a natural connexion between vice and misery, visible in many instances now, it is presumption and madness for the sinner to flatter himself, that he can ever be secure from misery without renouncing his sins.

It often proves a mercy to mankind, that vice is productive of present misery, because thus its progress is retarded, and, in some instances, transgressors are thus reclaimed. This seems to have been the case with our fallen hero. While he indulged, with profound security, the luxuries of life, he forgot the vow which should have bound him to the strictest purity; and, to what depth he might have fallen, if nothing had disturbed his guilty slumbers, we cannot tell. But awakened by the insulting alarm, *The Philistines be upon thee;* and, after a fruitless effort, finding himself in their power, and

s former strength departed; experiencing the sad
ange from a hero to a slave, and the sudden trans-
on from a seat of judgment to a dungeon, he be-
n, we may suppose, to reflect on the errours of
s life, and especially on his late criminal conduct,
hich had produced so dismal a reverse; and in
s darksome solitude, exercised that deep repent-
ce, which entitled him to the divine favour, and
the return of the supernatural gift which had for-
ken him.

Affliction is the common means of repentance.
hen transgressors are bound in fetters of iron,
d holden in cords of affliction, God sheweth them
eir works, openeth their ears to discipline, and
mmandeth that they return from iniquity.

It is happy for some to be denied the means, and
t off from the opportunities of former indulgences.
mson, in prison, had it no longer in his power
pursue a habit, which was dangerously gaining
fluence upon him. He here renewed his Naza-

SERMON XXI.

Reflections on Abraham's Artifice with Abimelech.

GENESIS, xx. 10. 11.

And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? And Abraham said, because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.

ABRAHAM, having occasion to remove from Mamre toward the southern part of the land of Canaan, to a place called *Gerar*, of which Abimelech was king, adopted, for the security of his life, the same expedient which he had once before used in Egypt. He desired his wife to disguise the relation between them, and to call him her brother, and he also agreed to call her his sister, lest some of the people, tempted by her beauty, should kill him for her sake.

From so good a man, and one who had so often experienced the divine protection, we should not have expected an artifice like this; especially as the result, on a former trial, had taught him how

nnecessary it was. But the best men have their eaknesses; and in men, whose faith is ordinarily trong, fear will sometimes prevail.

Abimelech, supposing Sarah to be only Abraam's sister, sent and took her into his house, with n intention, not to dishonour her, but to make her is wife.

Before he had accomplished this design, God, by dream in the night, warned him of the dangerous tep which he was meditating, and directed him to estore the woman to Abraham, whose wife she as.

The king, after professing the innocence of his ntentions, calls for Abraham, and thus expostutes with him on the unjustifiable deception which e had used. "What hast thou done to us? and, What have I offended thee, that thou hast brought n me, and on my kingdom, a great sin?" i. e. xposed us to a great scandal and calamity. "Thou ast done deeds to me, which ought not to be done.

But though Abraham's account of their relation, was, according to the language of the times, literally true; yet his concealment of the more delicate and important relation, could not, on the reason assigned, be justified. For surely he ought not to have gone voluntarily among a people, where he apprehended no regard would be paid to the conjugal rights: Or, if he was called in providence to sojourn among them, he might have trusted to divine protection.

This incident, in the history of Abraham's life, will afford us some useful observations.

I. The atrocious nature of the sin of *adultery*, which consists in violating connubial rights, is here represented in a very striking manner.

Though Abraham supposed that there was no sense of God and religion among the people of Gerar, yet he seems not to have entertained the least suspicion, that they would insult the honour of his family, either by rape or seduction. His apprehension was, that they would *kill him* for his wife's sake. He imagined, that no man could be so abandoned, as to take his wife from him, or debauch her, while he was alive; but he was much afraid, there were men bad enough to murder him, that they might have liberty to enjoy her.

Abraham evidently considers *adultery* as a crime far more horrid in its nature, and far more contrary to the dictates of natural reason and conscience, than even *murder* itself. His whole conduct, in this, and the former instance, is grounded on the supposition, that a ruffian, who is bloody enough to assassinate an innocent man, yet may not be so brutal as to violate a married woman. The man who can do the latter, in a deliberate and customary manner, is undoubtedly capable of any kind of wickedness, to which he feels the smallest temptation.

Murder is generally considered as one of the ackest crimes of which a man can be guilty. But is observable, that, by the divine law, the same enalty is annexed to adultery, as to murder: And, erhaps, of the two, it is the greater crime. It rtainly indicates a more depraved state of mind. lurder may be the effect of high provocation, or dden passion. The other proceeds from a settled, bitual viciosity of heart. And in its consequen- s no species of villany can be more mischievous— ore fatal. It is contrary to the peace and order of ciety—both of particular families, and of larger mmunities. It is an unprovoked, and irrepara- e injury to men, in those rights of which they are ost jealous. It robs them of that comfort and en- yment, which they value no less than life, and ithout which life is hardly supportable. It ex- nds its baleful effects to the innocent offspring, nd dooms them, without their fault, to infamy and isery. It is a violation of the most sacred and

cern for the rights of mankind is absorbed in his own lawless gratifications. His regard to the Deity is totally lost in sensuality. His social and benevolent affections are extinguished in the polluted sink of brutal indulgence.

Such a depraved libertine cannot be supposed to possess a single principle of virtue or honour; or to be secure from any vice, if only a temptation should offer itself. Joseph, solicited to this crime, rejected the proposal with the strongest abhorrence. "My master," says he to the lewd enchantress, "knoweth not what is with me in the house, and hath committed all that he hath into mine hand, neither hath he kept back any thing from me, but thee, because thou art his wife; How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" His words import, that a man, who feels in his heart any fear of the presence of God, or any regard to the rights of his fellow men, cannot deliberately perpetrate so vile an action.

David, in his penitent reflections on this sin, and the murder which followed, prays, "Create in me a clean heart—deliver me from blood, thou God of my salvation. Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it. The sacrifices of God are a broken heart."

In the case of Abimelech, God says, "The woman, whom thou hast taken, is a man's wife; and unless thou restore her, thou shalt surely die." From this moment he indulged not a single thought of retaining her in his house. And such a sense had his people of the sacredness of the conjugal relation, that, when they heard of the unhappy errour, into which their prince had fallen, they were in painful anxiety for the consequences. To wipe off, as far as possible, the reproach brought on the community by this transaction, the king avowed the innocence of his intentions, immediately restor-

ed to Abraham his wife, made him a liberal donation of servants, flocks, and herds, and gave him the fullest assurance of future security in his kingdom. The whole transaction shews the utter abhorrence which this people had of the crime under consideration.

This crime has been held in detestation by almost all nations, in all ages of the world. By the ancient laws of *Draco* and *Solon*, the husband of an adulteress, if he detected her in her guilt, might immediately kill both the criminals, or stigmatize them, or put out their eyes, or might exact of the adulterer a heavy fine. But, by the law of Moses, they were both to be put to death with publick infamy; and, in ordinary cases, there was no dispensation.

I proceed to observe,

II. That a sense of virtue and religion is sometimes found where we least expect it.

How different was the true character of the people in Gerar, from that which Abraham's jealousy had drawn for them? There was much of the fear of God among them, though he had imagined there was none at all.

It appears, from this short history, that the prince of the country was a man of great virtue. He was not an idolater, but a worshipper of the true God, as was also Melchizedek the priest. He was not a stranger to divine Revelations, though favoured with them in a lower degree than Abraham. As God, on the occasion here mentioned, communicated to him his will in a dream, so there is no doubt, but, on other occasions, he had been favoured with divine discoveries. He seems not to have been unacquainted with this manner of receiving intimations of the divine pleasure. He acknowledges a supreme governour of the world, and regards him as a being of almighty power, and of per-

fect rectitude and goodness. He expresses a benevolent care for the safety of his people, and a just concern, lest they should suffer by his mistake. He professes an integrity of heart in what he had done, and God approves the profession. He readily obeys the divine command in restoring the woman he had taken; and while he reproves Abraham for the needless artifice which he had used, he gives back his wife uninjured, accepts his intercession for himself and his people, and, retaining no unsuitable resentment, dismisses him with generous presents, and with full liberty to dwell in his territories.

Though it is not probable, that all the people were equally virtuous with the prince, yet a sense of justice, and a regard to the common rights of mankind, evidently belonged to their general character. Abimelech appeals to Abraham, whether he had seen, since he had been in the country, any thing, which could be matter of complaint, or could require such deception as had been used: Abraham pretends nothing more, than a previous jealousy, that the fear of God was not in that place.

We see then, that to condemn sects or communities in the gross, to censure and reprobate men on mere suspicion, to conclude that there can be no religion among those who enjoy not advantages equal to our own, is rash and unjustifiable. Where external advantages are less, internal assistances may, for aught we know, in some instances be greater.

To suppose that they, who enjoy a standing Revelation, should receive immediate discoveries from God, in the things of religion, would, indeed, be absurd: for, on this supposition, the standing Revelation becomes useless. God never communicates to men, in an immediate way, those things which they may learn by means already in their hands.

Cornelius is favoured with a vision from heaven;

t this vision gives him no instruction in the way
salvation ; it only directs him to send for an Apos-
, who should teach him things, by which he
ight be saved. If we, who enjoy the gospel rev-
tion, laying this aside, depend on discoveries of
th made to us in another manner, we are guilty
the greatest insult on the authority of God, and
e highest affront to his goodness ; and we judge
rselves unworthy of eternal life. Where God
s given means, he requires the use of them, as
e condition of his favour.

But we cannot hence determine, but that God,
his good spirit, may so assist, direct, and en-
hten the minds of some who enjoy not our ex-
rnal means, that they will make improvements in
owledge and virtue far beyond the exertions of
mple nature. We see, in the instance under con-
leration, that a people, among whom Abraham
agined there was no knowledge or fear of God,
ere led to worthy conceptions of his character and

ces of vice are too often seen in men, whose education, advantages and profession, had given us quite different expectations. Many, who are last, shall be first; and the first shall be last. Let us not condemn others for their want of privileges, but beware, lest we be condemned for our abuse of them. How God will deal with those who enjoy not our light, it is not easy for us to decide. But how he will deal with us, if we walk not in the light, there remains no doubt.

III. The case, under consideration, teaches us that the indulgence of too bad an opinion of mankind, is of dangerous consequence to ourselves and others.

Had Abraham entertained a just opinion of the prince and people of Gerar; or taken pains to become acquainted with them, before he listened to the secret whispers of jealousy, he would have shunned so dangerous an artifice, as to disguise his relation to his wife, and would have prevented the mischiefs which ensued, and the still greater mischiefs which threatened his own family and the house of Abimelech. It was a special divine interposition, which averted consequences of the most serious nature.

Caution and circumspection in our intercourse with mankind, are always prudent, and may often be necessary. An implicit unguarded confidence, will expose us to many inconveniences, and may involve us in ruin. The advice which our Saviour gave his disciples, deserves attention in times less dangerous than those. *Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Beware of men.* Put not confidence in every one. Expose not yourselves to unnecessary dangers. But ever maintain your innocence. Injure no man; and then, as far as prudence can secure you, let no man injure you.

But we must not carry our caution to a total distrust of mankind, nor treat them with such appar-

ent jealousy, as would naturally provoke their resentment; neither ought we, in our concern for our own security, to pursue unwarrantable measures, or neglect the plain calls of duty.

By extreme caution, men often run into the mischiefs which they aim to avoid; and by excessive jealousy bring on themselves injuries, which were not before intended. By indulging too ill an opinion of those around them, they contract a sourness of temper, a reservedness of behaviour, an unsociableness of manners, which injure their own feelings, obstruct their usefulness, and disgust those with whom they converse. Good Elijah, in an evil day, met with so many obstructions and discouragements in his endeavours to reform the nation, that he gave over his labours, and retired to a cave. While he was there, indulging a gloomy imagination, he concluded that there was no piety in the land, and no safety for him. "Lord," says he, "they have pulled down thine altars, and slain thy prophets, and I only am left, and they seek my life." But, What says the divine answer? "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal."—"What dost thou here Elijah?"

His ill opinion of the world first urged him into a cave; and, in this retirement, the gloom increased, until his jealousy condemned mankind without reserve.

While we mingle with the world, we should keep ourselves unspotted from it. But to shun the pollutions of it, we must not withdraw from all intercourse with it. The Christian is to keep himself from an untoward generation, and to be blameless and harmless and without rebuke in the midst of the ungodly and profane, holding forth the word of life, that others may be gained by his good conversation.

IV. It is proper farther to remark, that, in the best men, there may be great infirmities and failings.

None is more celebrated than Abraham for the eminence of his piety, and the strength of his faith. He was strong in faith, giving glory to God. The greatness of his faith appeared, in his leaving his native land at the divine call, and going forth to sojourn in a strange country—in his steady observance of the worship of God, in all places where he sojourned, in his pursuing the enemies who had conquered and plundered the country of Sodom, recovering from them the spoils which they had taken, and restoring them to the proper owners, in his reliance on the divine promise concerning his seed, at a time of life, when, according to the course of nature, no issue could be expected, in his obeying the painful command, to offer up that son in whom his seed was to be called; and in his reasoning from past experience that God was able to raise him from the dead, from whence he had already received him in a figure.

Could we imagine that such a man as this would, on any occasion, betray symptoms of timidity, or discover a distrust of God?—But this same patriarch, when he went to sojourn in Gerar, dared not own his relation to his wife, lest the men of the place should kill him for her sake. Where is now the faith and fortitude, which at other times, he discovered, when difficulties pressed, and dangers threatened him?—His faith now languished; his fear prevailed; and, in a time of imaginary danger, he adopted a method of conduct which exposed him to the reproof of the very persons, who, he imagined, had not the fear of God.

Let him, who thinks that he stands, take heed lest he fall.

Even they whose faith is strong, must guard against the prevailing influence of fear, and call

o exercise that confidence in God which is the
st security against the terrours of the world.

In times of apparent danger, and threatening
nptation, they have need to be peculiarly watch-
. Let them deliberately inquire, whither Prov-
nce calls them; and, having found the line of
ir duty, pursue it with calm resolution, and
ady reliance on the divine protection.

We are never so safe, as when we invariably
low the path of virtue and integrity. He who
lks uprightly, walks surely; but he who per-
rts his way, shall fall. Duplicity and artifice, to
oid an evil, will but embarrass us the more. It
s only a special, gracious interposition, which
evented most fatal consequences, from the patri-
ch's unworthy device.

While we aim to act with integrity ourselves, let
remember the weakness of human nature, and
at with candour the failings of our fellow men.
e see weakness and errour in so good a man as

SERMON XXII.

The Kingdom of God without Observation.

LUKE xvii. 20, 21.

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, When the kingdom of God should come; he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here; or, lo there; for behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

THIS phrase, *the kingdom of God*, is frequently used in the new testament; and it signifies either that state of glory, to which good men will be exalted in the future world, or the gospel dispensation, and the church of God in this world. The latter is the more common acceptation, and evidently intended in the text. The question of the Pharisees, *When shall the kingdom of God appear?* manifestly respected the kingdom of the Messiah, or that dispensation which he was to introduce. Christ, in his answer, uses the phrase in the same sense, only correcting their mistake concerning its nature, and the manner of its introduction and establishment.

At the time of our Saviour's appearance, there prevailed a general expectation of him. This ex-

ectation was grounded on the prophecies, which
ıd expressly foretold the certainty, and accurate-
stated the time of his coming. But the prophe-
es, which described the *manner* of his appearance,
ere grossly misapprehended by most of the Jews,
ıd especially by the Pharisees. The grand and
fty figures representing the power of his doctrines,
ey understood as expressing the majesty of his
mporal dominion, and the splendour of his earth-
court.

They demanded of Jesus, *when the kingdom of
od should come ;* meaning, when would the Mes-
ah come to erect his kingdom in Judea, and to de-
ver the Jews from the oppressions of a foreign pow-
. Jesus had declared himself to be the promised
lessiah. But there was nothing in his condition,
hich answered to *their* ideas of his temporal reign.
stead of that wealth and power, that splendid
urt and numerous host, with which they expect-
he would be attended, they saw him poor and

of God is within you, or *among you:* And it will be extended wherever my doctrines are preached. *It will reach from one part under heaven, unto the other part under heaven.* So he adds, verse 24.—This kingdom is already begun among you, being preached by me and my disciples, and confirmed by the evidence of my works; and soon it will spread around, and bless other nations of the earth. Seek it not in this, or in that particular place; know that it is come to you already: Submit now to its authority; secure its blessings, where ye are.

The illustration of these words—*The kingdom of God cometh not with observation,* will lead us to some important thoughts on the nature and design of the gospel, and prepare our way for some useful reflections.

1. The *manner,* in which the gospel was first *introduced,* was without external show and ostentation.

Wordly kingdoms are usually erected and supported by the power of arms. The princes of the world, the better to command the respect and obedience of their subjects, are distinguished by riches, splendour and equipage. But the kingdom of Christ was introduced without any of these forms of pomp and grandeur.

He came, meek and lowly, publishing peace, and bringing salvation to mankind.

John, his forerunner, appeared in the wilderness, preaching repentance, and warning men to flee from the wrath to come. His humble habit, and austere manner of life, were suited to the doctrine which he preached.

Jesus himself was born in an obscure family, and educated in a manner below the common rank of people. He grew up as a root out of dry ground. There was in him no form or comliness to captivate the admiration of earthly pride. He entered on

his publick ministry with solemn fasting; and was consecrated to his work by the washing appointed for the priests under the law. To prove his divine authority, he performed many miracles; but these were of the mild and benevolent, not of the showy and ostentatious kind. He exerted his heavenly power, not, as a worldly conqueror would wish to do, in overturning kingdoms, and spreading destruction among his enemies; but in relieving the distressed, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, and giving sight to the blind. He was not attended with armed bands to defend his person, but with a few disciples to assist in spreading his doctrines. He laboured, not to raise himself to wealth and power, but to promote truth and righteousness among our degenerate race. He displayed his dignity, not in revenging injuries, but in continual exercises of mercy and forgiveness; and gained subjects, not by the force and terrour of the sword, but by the persuasive influence of reason and goodness. He closed the scene, not by dealing death among his enemies, but by dying for their salvation. His last prayer was, not for vengeance, but for pardon to those who compassed his death. And when he ascended on high, the language of his lips was in blessings of peace, not in imprecations of wrath.

2. The *external dispensation* of Christ's kingdom is without ostentation.

His laws are plain and easy to be understood, and delivered in language level to common apprehension. The motives, by which obedience is urged, are pure and spiritual, taken not from this, but the future world. His institutions are few and simple, adapted to our condition, and suited to warm and engage the heart.

When the law was given from Sinai, the people prayed—*Let Moses speak, and we will hear; but let not God speak, lest we die.* The pomp and ma-

jesty, with which the law was proclaimed, struck them with terrour. They desired to receive it in a gentle manner. In the gospel dispensation, God has condescended to the weakness of our nature. In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, who is indeed the brightness of his glory, but has veiled this glory in human flesh, being made in all things like unto us, that he might be a merciful high priest. And those whom he has appointed to administer the affairs of his government, are men of like passions with ourselves. The Apostle says, *We are ambassadors of Christ, as though God did by us beseech you; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* In regard of the mildness of the gospel dispensation, compared with the law, the Apostle says to the Hebrews—*Ye are not come to the mount, which might be touched,* the sensible, tangible mount—*and which burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which they who heard could not endure; but ye are come to mount Sion, and the city of the living God, the general assembly and church of the first born, to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant: We have received a kingdom, which cannot be moved. Let us therefore have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*

3. The *virtues*, which the Gospel principally inculcates, are without observation, distant from worldly show, and independent of worldly applause.

The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The religion of Christ consists not in those actions, which glare in the eyes of the world, and strike the minds of men with admiration; such as courage in war, conquest over enemies, acquiring territory and spread-

ing dominion; but in sincere piety, humble devotion, lively faith, strict sobriety, patient self-denial, extensive charity, and contempt of the world. These are modest virtues, remote from ostentation. They seek not applause from men, but only the silent approbation of God and the heart.

The kingdom of God is received with *faith*. This is the great principle of obedience. This was the doctrine with which Jesus began his ministry—*The kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel.*

Faith is not only a persuasion of the truth, but also a submission to the authority of the gospel. As it supposes a conviction of personal guilt and unworthiness, so it implies a godly sorrow for sin—a reliance on the mercy of God, through the Redeemer, for pardon—a desire of his sanctifying and assisting grace—and a resolution to walk in newness of life. It is accompanied with a hatred of sin, a watchfulness against it, and earnest breathings after holiness. These operations of faith come not with observation. Though they are powerfully felt in the believing soul, they are not seen by others. They become visible only in their effects.

Where the kingdom of God takes place, there is a great change in the *temper* and *disposition* of the mind.—*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;* and this is a humble creature. We must receive the kingdom of God as little children, as new born babes.—*Except ye be converted,* says the Saviour, *and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; but whoso shall humble himself as a little child, the same is greatest in that kingdom.* The gospel, where it comes with power, mortifies the pride of the heart, humbles the soul at the foot of a sovereign God, casts down imaginations, and every high thing which exalts

itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

The subjects of this kingdom exercise a temper of *selfdenial. Whosoever will come after me*, says Christ, *let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*—This selfdenial principally consists in the denial of *ungodliness* and *worldly lusts.* They who are under the dominion of sin, make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. They contrive the means of gratifying pride, ambition, covetousness, and sensual desires. But when the kingdom of God takes place in them, they no longer live to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. They keep under the body to bring it into subjection. They abstain from the appearance of evil, and especially watch against their own iniquity. They maintain a warfare with themselves, and with the world; and seek grace that they may cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and may perfect holiness in the fear of God.

The kingdom of God in the soul *subdues worldly affections.* As it is not of this world, but from heaven, so the subjects of it seek the things which are above, not the things which are on the earth.

Worldly affections, reigning in the soul, are inconsistent with the religion of Christ. He came to deliver us from this evil world. Faith in him overcomes the world. They who trust in riches cannot enter into his kingdom. He has chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, to be heirs of the kingdom which he has promised; and he has declared, that only to the poor in spirit the blessings of it belong.

The kingdom of God is a kingdom of *peace* and *love.* It not only calls men into a state of peace with God, but requires them to live in peace with one another. Benevolence, condescension, meek-

ness, forbearance, and inoffensiveness, are distinguishing virtues of Christ's disciples. A temper of charity is the grand qualification for a subject of his kingdom. This is the end of the commandment, and the bond of perfectness. For this we are called into his kingdom; and then only we walk worthy of our calling, when we walk in all lowliness, longsuffering, and meekness, forbear one another in love, and keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is nothing more offensive to the Prince of peace, than contentions, animosities, and tumults among his subjects. There is no law of his kingdom more fully expressed, more frequently repeated, and more solemnly enforced, than that which requires us to love one another, and to study the things which make for peace. We are commanded to mark and avoid them who cause divisions and offences. Mutual love and condescension, are the marks by which Christ's disciples are to be known among men.

Charity is a humble, modest virtue. It makes no ostentation. Contentions and disputes are noisy and tumultuous. They make uproar and confusion. But love is still and silent. It does good without sounding a trumpet. While it scatters blessings with one hand, the other scarcely knows what is doing. It prays for, and forgives offenders in secret, and makes no proclamation. It bestows favours on little ones, on persons of obscure condition. Such favours seldom come to publick notice. They fall not under the observation of the world.

4. As the temper of the gospel, so also *the operation of the divine spirit*, in producing this temper, is without observation.

A divine influence is necessary to form the hearts of fallen men to the love of religion. This influence is afforded, wherever the gospel is dispensed.

But this is a secret influence: It comes not with observation. It is something, which the human eye cannot see. They who are the subjects of it, cannot directly and immediately distinguish it from the rational operations of their own minds. They know it rather by its holy fruits, than by sense and consciousness. Our Saviour says, It is as *the wind, which bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth.* This influence, like the gospel itself, is soft, mild, and gentle. It is not a tempest, an earthquake, or fire; but a small still voice. It is a spirit of power, but yet a spirit of love, and of a sound mind. The fruits of it, like its nature, are kind and benevolent. They are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, and goodness. The wisdom of the world is attended with strife and confusion: But the wisdom from above, is pure, and peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits.

5. The *blessings* of God's kingdom are chiefly invisible, and without observation.

The rewards which the gospel promises are not earthly and temporal, but heavenly and spiritual. They are not external power, wealth, and honour; but inward peace, hope, and joy here, and everlasting felicity hereafter. In this world, the good Christian is subject to the same outward calamities which attend others. But he has consolations, which spring only from religion, and which a stranger intermeddles not with. He rejoices in the approving testimony of his conscience; in hope of the glory of God; and in the happy influence of his afflictions, which work patience, give him experience, enliven his love to God, and confirm his heavenly hope. The Apostle says, *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; as sorrowful, yet always re-*

joicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things. It is the power of religion in the heart, which enables the Christian, in all his trials, thus to triumph in Christ Jesus.

We see in what respects, the kingdom of God comes without observation. How happy is the state of the sincere Christian! He has a kingdom within him. He may be poor and despised in this world. He may suffer a variety of adversity and distress; but he is a subject of the King of saints. He receives continual supplies and consolations from heaven. He has peace of mind, and hope toward God. He is an heir of everlasting glory. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

SERMON XXIII.

The Kingdom of God without Observation.

LUKE, xvii. 20, 21.

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, When the kingdom of God should come; he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here; or, lo there; for behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

IN what respects the kingdom of God, or the gospel dispensation, comes without observation, we have shewn in a preceding discourse. We will now attend to the reflections and instructions which our subject offers to us.

1. If the kingdom of God is now among us, we are all, without exception, bound to acknowledge it, and submit to it.

As Jesus declared himself to be the Messiah, who, according to the prophecies of scripture, was to come into the world, the Pharisees demanded of him, when his kingdom was to begin. He answered them, that it was begun already. He was now working miracles to prove his heavenly mis-

sion. He was now preaching the way of salvation for sinners. He was now proclaiming peace to them, and stating the terms of their acceptance. The kingdom of Messiah, foretold by the prophets, was now among them. It only remained for them to bow down in humble submission to its laws, and secure the happiness which it promised.

Wherever God sends his gospel, there he erects his kingdom, and calls men to become the subjects of it. And it is at their peril, if they reject it. When Jesus came, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, he said to the people—*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: Repent ye, and believe the gospel.*

We are not to suppose, that it is at our option, whether we will enter into this kingdom, or not. We are indispensably bound to receive it. Among the various forms of human government, we may choose the one which pleases us best. A people may adopt that constitution, in which they can agree and unite. If particular members of a community disapprove the constitution, which is chosen and ratified, they have a natural right to repair to some other society, whose government suits them better. But the kingdom of God is not to be viewed in this light. It is not a mere form, which men may take, or let alone at pleasure, and which derives its authority merely from human consent. It is a kingdom of righteousness; and its authority is absolute and universal.

God is the supreme Lord of all worlds. He has a sovereign right to our obedience. His wisdom has framed the order, his will has established the authority, and his goodness has made to us the discovery of his kingdom; and it is a kingdom which cannot be moved. Our rejection of it must be accompanied with the highest guilt, and our disobedience will be followed with the most amazing *punishment.*

Some seem to imagine, that if they profess themselves the subjects of this kingdom, they come under higher and stricter obligations than others; and that there are then duties incumbent on them, in which, before they had no concern. Under this delusive imagination, many, it is probable, decline to make any profession at all, that they may feel themselves more at liberty to walk according to the course of the world.

But the truth is, the kingdom of God is come nigh to us; it is among us; and we are all bound to profess obedience, and yield it too. We have no more right to reject God's kingdom, when it is offered, than we have to withhold obedience when we have promised it. A profession is not the assumption of arbitrary obligations, but an acknowledgement of real ones. A profession of obedience is required; and he who refuses it, is guilty of the same contempt of divine authority, as he who refuses obedience after he has professed it.

The gospel dispensation is sometimes called *a covenant.* Now, because the validity of covenants between man and man, depends on mutual consent and agreement, we are apt insensibly to fall into this conception of the *divine* covenant. But we should remember, that God is a sovereign; that we stand not on the ground of equality with him, as we do with men; that his wisdom is perfect, and his authority supreme; and *his covenant he commands us.* Wherever he reveals and proposes it, the obligations of it take place. Whether we consent or not, still we come within its authority. Though our consent is necessary to our enjoying the saving benefits of it, yet it is not necessary to our coming under its commanding power.

Whatever excuses may be made for the heathens, who have never known the gospel, these excuses cannot be admitted in our case, because God has

placed us in a very different condition from theirs; and we cannot put ourselves in their condition, if we would.

The wickedness of those who profess the gospel, is indeed highly aggravated. But the aggravation arises from the *enjoyment*, rather than from the *profession* of the gospel. *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and they have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.* Their guilt is aggravated, not in comparison with the guilt of those who enjoy the gospel, and yet refuse to profess it; but rather in comparison with the guilt of those, who have never known the gospel, nor had an opportunity to profess it.

Our Saviour, alluding to the state of the Jewish nation, who received their kings by an appointment from Rome, illustrates the kingdom of God, or the gospel dispensation, by a parable of a certain nobleman, who went into a far country, to receive to himself a kingdom, and to return. This nobleman, at his departure, committed to his servants the care of his money, with a direction to occupy it for him, until he came back. These servants had professed a regard for his person, and an attachment to his interest, and with them he trusts his riches. But there were some of his citizens who hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, *We will not have this man to reign over us.* When he returned, having received the kingdom, he first called his servants to a reckoning, among whom was found one who had neglected to improve his Lord's money. This negligent servant fell under his severe displeasure. He said to them who stood by, *Take from him the pound, for from him who hath not,* or improveth not what is committed to him, *shall be taken away even that which he hath.* But, What became of those, who would

not that he should reign over them ?—Were they excused ? or, Was their punishment alleviated, because they had never professed themselves his servants ? No : After sentence on the unfaithful servant, the king says—*But those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.*

In the parable of the wedding feast, there were some who made light of the king's invitation, and injuriously treated the messengers who brought it. Among those who accepted the invitation, there was one found without a wedding garment. This unworthy guest was bound, and cast into outer darkness ; and against those who rejected the invitation, and abused his servants, the king sent forth his armies, and destroyed them, and burnt up their city.

You see then the indispensable obligation of all, to whom the gospel comes, to profess their belief of, and subjection to it. Do you decline to make a religious profession, from an apprehension, that after this, the guilt of your sins will be aggravated? Know, that whether you make a profession or not, the guilt of your sins is already aggravated, from the advantages under which the gospel has placed you. *They who know their Lord's will, and do it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.* It is vain to think of securing yourselves, by pleading that you are not of the number of professors ; for God has not left it to your choice, whether you will be of that number, any more than he has left it to your choice whether you will love and fear him. You have no more right to live at large, and unconnected with the Christian church, than you have to be unjust, profane, or intemperate. No caution of this kind can avail to alleviate your guilt. Yea, the very pretence confutes itself; for, while you deliberate

how to sin with safety, you discover a heart set in you to do evil.

2. We learn, that it concerns every one, not only to submit to God's kingdom, but to submit to it *immediately*. There is no occasion for delay.

Imagine not that the kingdom of God comes with such observation, that there are only particular *times* when you may enter into it. It is come nigh to you. Its laws are now stated, and its blessings proposed; and you may submit to these laws, and secure these blessings now, as well as hereafter. You are not to wait for a more favourable opportunity; but to embrace the present. The Apostle says, *We have received a kingdom, which cannot be moved.* It is a steady, as well as a perpetual kingdom. Its laws are always the same, its blessings are continually offered, its grace is ever free. *Let us have grace, that we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.*

You are not to suppose, that God grants his spirit *only* at certain seasons; that then it comes as a violent shower, with such observation, as distinguishes this from all other seasons; and that these are the only seasons of salvation.—He stretches out his hand, all the day long, even to the disobedient and gainsaying. His spirit strives with sinners, while his long-suffering waits. The stiffnecked and perverse, *always* resist the Holy Ghost. He *now* commands all to repent, and invites all to receive the blessings of his grace. We are to hear his voice, while it is called *today*. *Now is the day of salvation, and the time of acceptance.* We are not to delay, under an apprehension that God will be more gracious, the operations of the spirit more powerful, or our hearts better disposed, at another time, than this. We are to improve *this* time, *this* day, as the only season, which is ours; remembering, that God waits to be gracious, and exalts himself that he may have mercy.

3. We are here taught, that we have no occasion to run from place to place, in order to find the grace of God, for we may obtain it in any place, where his Providence calls us.

We are not to imagine, that the spirit of God is poured out in such, or such a place, and no where else; and that, in order to obtain a portion of the spirit, we must go to such a place, hear such a preacher, or join with such an assembly. The kingdom of God comes not with observation; neither shall men have occasion to say, *Lo, it is here; or, lo, it is there:* For the spirit is not confined to certain places; its influences are not at human disposal, nor do its operations come with publick observation. The gospel is a ministration of the spirit. Where God sends the former, he sends also the latter. You are to receive the spirit in the hearing of faith. Its influence on the heart is not like an overbearing storm, but as the gentle rain on the tender herb, and the dew on the grass.

We are to attend on the ordinances which God has appointed, in the place which his providence points out, hoping for a blessing in the way which his wisdom has prescribed. Here we are to lift up holy hands, not doubting of his readiness to give his spirit to them who ask him, in this place, as well as another. If they say, *See here*, or, *see there; go not after them, nor follow them, for the kingdom of God is among you.* God grants his grace in his own way; and when in his way we seek, we may be sure to find.

4. We learn from our subject, that true religion is not ostentatious. It seeks not observation.

The true Christian is exemplary, but not vain. He is careful to maintain good works, but affects not an unnecessary show of them. He does nothing through vain glory, but thinks and acts with lowliness of mind. He will not put himself for-

ward, or take upon him to censure and dictate. Conscious of his numerous imperfections, he hopes humbly, reproves gently, hears reproof patiently, judges charitably, and shews out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

Real religion begins in selfabasement, in a conviction of sin, sense of unworthiness, and reliance on free mercy. The same humble temper, in which it begins, accompanies its future works. The Christian, after his highest improvements, remembers what he was once, a guilty creature, exposed to wrath. He considers, that from this deplorable condition he was recovered by the sovereign grace of God. He reckons not himself to have already attained, or to be already made perfect; but he presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling. He glories not in his attainments, but laments his deficiencies. When he compares himself with other Christians, he is inclined to hope them better than himself. His language is not—*God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men; but, God be merciful to me a sinner.* In the performance of duty he seeks not the observation of men, but the approbation of God. If he perceives a regard to human opplause creeping in, and mingling itself with spiritual duties, he abhors himself, laments the remaining corruption of his heart, prays for grace to cleanse him from it, and keeps his soul with greater diligence. If he sees reason to rejoice in a consciousness of his integrity, he acknowledges with the apostle, *By the grace of God, I am what I am.*

5. It appears, that they only are the true subjects of God's kingdom, who have experienced its power on their hearts.

A religion, that is merely external, will carry none to the world of glory. Let us then inquire, what influence the gospel has *within* us.

We profess to believe its divinity and importance. Have we felt its transforming power? Are we governed by its doctrines, and conformed to its precepts? Have we received the kingdom of God as little children, with a meek, humble, teachable, and obedient spirit? Have we been taught by the grace of God to deny ourselves? Are our wills subjected to God's authority, and our affections raised to heavenly objects? If we are strangers to this internal operation of the gospel, then it has only come near to us; but we have not received it.—How great is our guilt?

To us the word of salvation is sent; and it will not return empty. It will not leave us, as it found us. It will have some mighty effect. If it is not a savour of life unto life, it will be a savour of death unto death. If we treat with contempt the gospel of the grace of God, our condemnation will be more dreadful than if we never had known it. We are then in a most solemn situation; guilty and worthy of death, under the offer of pardon, on trial whether we will accept it. The issue of our probation will be an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, or everlasting misery, aggravated beyond conception by a contempt of offered salvation. Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish,—God will perform a work, which you will not believe, though one declare it to you.

6. As the kingdom of God comes not to the heart with observation, we are incompetent judges of the characters of others.

It is a great thing to know our own hearts; impossible for us to know the hearts of others. God only knows the hearts of all the children of men. Therefore judge nothing before the time, till the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart. And happy they, who then

shall have praise of God. In the mean time, let us not judge and condemn one another; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block, or occasion to fall, in his brother's way. Why should we judge and set at nought our brother? We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Since we cannot look into the hearts of our brethren, we must hope all things, and leave the decision of their state to him, whose judgment is according to truth. We are not to exclude men from our charity and fellowship on mere suspicion, or for want of the highest evidence of sincerity; but whoever professes subjection to the kingdom of Christ, and contradicts not that profession by an ungodly life, him we must receive as a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household of God. Let us therefore be likeminded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus; and receive one another as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. Let us comfort and encourage one another, as fellow workers to the kingdom of God, unite our influence to increase the number of his subjects, and to enlarge the extent of his kingdom on earth, and, in all things walk worthy of him, who has called us to his kingdom and glory.

SERMON XXIV.

Innumerable gone to the Grave, and every Man drawing after them.

JOB, xxi. 33.

And every man shall draw after him, as there are innumerable before him.

THE main purpose of Job's discourse in the preceding verses, and indeed through a great part of this book, is to shew, that no judgment can be formed of men's characters by the present dispensations of Providence toward them; for good men often meet with great calamities in the course of their life; and some are early cut off by the hand of violence; and wicked men, on the other hand, as often prosper in their worldly designs, live to old age, and go down to the grave by a natural death; and consequently we must look for another state, in which an equitable distribution of rewards and punishments may take place.

He particularly observes concerning death, which is the greatest of worldly evils, and the most dreaded by the sons of men, that it is appointed, not as a punishment merely for a few distinguished

offenders, but as the common lot of all; and therefore from the time, manner, and circumstances of a man's death, we can conclude nothing concerning his character.

When we see one, by any means, or at any age, brought to the grave, we may properly make the same reflection which Job makes in our text—*Every man shall draw after him, as there have been innumerable before him.*

Such an event, however common, is very solemn. It admonishes us of the mortal condition of the human race, and of our own mortality in particular.

Job observes, that *innumerable* have already been brought to the grave. This was true in his day: It is more emphatically true now.

The numbers which have mingled with the dust, since man was first placed on the earth, exceed all computation. The human race has existed almost six thousand years. Before the flood the succession was less rapid, and probably the world less populous, than it is now. Procreation seems to have begun later in some proportion to the greater length of life. In the antediluvian genealogy no mention is made of a parent younger than sixty five years. But still, as the longevity of men, in that period, gave time for numerous families to spring from each progenitor, we must suppose, that the numbers, which were born and died, in the space of sixteen hundred years, were vastly great.

For a few generations after the flood, human life was still prolonged to a considerable extent. But it is now more than three thousand years, since it has been reduced to its present scanty measure. The earth is supposed to change its inhabitants, at a medium, three times in a century. The change, in this part of the world, is not so rapid; but applied to the world in general, perhaps the estimate

is not far from the truth. The number of people on the globe, at any one time, cannot possibly be ascertained to any degree of exactness. But it must doubtless amount to many hundreds of millions. Some have reckoned about nine hundred millions. Probably this calculation does not exceed the truth. Now suppose so many souls passing off this stage, and as many coming on, thrice in the space of one hundred years, which will be nearly eighty thousand in a day; and suppose this to have been the rate of succession for several thousand years past, and you will easily conceive the propriety of the expression—*innumerable have gone before us.* The numbers, which have already lived and died, utterly surpass our comprehension.

The fate of past generations will be the fate of the present, and the future. When we see a man go down to the grave, this is a natural thought—*Every man will draw after him.* Had we no other evidence of our mortality, but what arises from the multitudes which have died before us, this would be sufficient to put it beyond a doubt.

Our knowledge of future events, in the natural world, chiefly depends on observation and experience. That which has uniformly been the course of things, in former time, we expect will be their course in time to come. That the sun will rise again, after it has set, that summer will succeed to winter, that harvest will follow seed time, that fire will warm us, and our food will strengthen us, we conclude with a sufficient degree of certainty, because this has ever been the steady course of nature. And experience gives us the same evidence, that we must go down to the grave, for innumerable have gone before us. For many thousand years there has not been an instance of a man's living to any considerable length of time, in this

world. When we look around, we find but here and there one, but who was born within seventy or eighty years; and much the greater part within half that time. To expect immortality here, would be as absurd, and as contradictory to all human experience, as to expect perpetual summer, or unchanging sunshine. And to conduct as if we were never to die is as irrational, as it would be to order our affairs in summer, on the presumption that there is never to be another winter.

Though no man needs evidence to convince him, yet every man needs warnings to remind him, of his mortality. Providence, therefore, so orders events as to give us continual admonitions of this serious and most interesting change. Every death which we see, though it can hardly be called a proof of what is already as evident as possible, yet is a fresh call from God to the sons of men, to think of, and prepare for, their own approaching death.

Admonitions of this kind are of all the most solemn and impressive, because they not only *tell* us, but *shew* us, that we must die. And that they may be suited to persons of every age and condition, may come with greater power, may strike the mind with some solemnity, and may not lose their effect by growing too familiar, God is pleased to send men to the grave by different means, in a variety of ways, in every period of life, and under the greatest imaginable diversity of circumstances. In almost every death, there is something new and affecting. Job observes in the preceding verses; *One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet, his breasts are full of milk, and his bones moistened with marrow: Another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.*

To dwell on the proof of so obvious a truth, would be a mispense of time. More useful will it be to entertain and apply the instructions and reflections, which it suggests to us.

1. In the mortality of the human race, we have a clear demonstration of a future state.

The frame of our bodies, and the powers of our minds, speak forth the wisdom of the Creator; for we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Perfect wisdom has some worthy end in all that it does, some good design in every thing which it makes. But for what purpose could man be made, if death terminates his existence? Here is a numerous race of creatures, which, in the present state, answer no end equal to the dignity, or suitable to the capacity of their nature. They have reason, memory, forethought, and reflection. They can look within and around, can contemplate the earth, and the heavens, can conceive immortal desires, and form eternal designs. They have fears of future evil, and hopes of future good. They can discern between right and wrong, approve the one and condemn the other. By study and application, they can improve their knowledge, enlarge their powers, and extend their prospects. But to what purpose is all this, if they have no existence beyond this poor, mortal state?—Are their desires and hopes, their fears and apprehensions, merely imaginary? Are they made with a sense of good and evil, and with the powers of reflection and forethought, only to vex and torment them?—Are they to be struck out of existence almost as soon as they come into it, without opportunity for their minds to open, spread, and reach their just perfection?—Can it be suspected, that an allwise Creator would make a race of intelligent, moral beings, to come on this stage, and pass off again by millions, in such rapid suc-

cession, for ages and ages together, when there is no rational or moral purpose to be answered?—Would he give an intellectual existence to creatures merely for an animal and momentary life; merely to sport for a day, like those swarms of insects, which play in a summer's sun, and then vanish into eternal non-existence? This is a supposition so contradictory to our ideas of creating wisdom, that we at once reject it. Let us then accustom ourselves to regard and improve this state as preparatory to another. Let every death, which we behold, remind us of a future world, and awaken us to make effectual provision for the important hour, when we must take our departure hence for an everlasting state.

2. What an evil and bitter thing is sin, which has brought into the world innumerable deaths!

Revelation teaches us, that *by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passes upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

Man was originally made for immortality. And though we cannot suppose, that, in case of innocence, he would always have lived in this world, in a state of continual increase, because then the earth must, in time, have been surcharged with inhabitants; yet his remove from this to a more perfect state, would certainly have been in a manner very different from death; perhaps by such an easy translation as that of Enoch and Elijah. It was by sin, that death made its gloomy entrance into the world, and gained its dreadful dominion over the human race. And the sin, by which it entered, was the first offence of the first human pair. It is not each man's personal transgression that subjects him to death; for death is common to all, to good and bad, to young and old, to them who have sinned, and to them who have not sinned by actual disobedience. Every man must go down to the grave,

whither innumerable have gone already. It is then only one single sin, which has made this awful havock.—*By one offence, death reigns.—By one offence, judgment is come on all men.* One transgression has filled the world with deaths, in ages past; nor is its baleful influence spent.

Shall we then, like fools, make a mock of sin?—Shall we think it a light and trifling matter to offend the great and holy God, to transgress his laws, and run in the face of his warnings and threatenings?—Shall we dare any longer to continue under the guilt of all our personal sins? Think what innumerable deaths one sin has produced, and then say, whether it be safe to live any longer exposed to the punishment, which our innumerable sins deserve.

How infinitely it concerns every son of Adam now to take the benefit of the glorious redemption purchased by the death of a Saviour!

The Son of God has come down to our world, and taken our nature, that he might suffer death for our redemption. It was not the intention of his death to exempt us from dying; die we must still; but to deliver us from the awful consequences of death—from eternal death. Let the consideration of the great evil of sin, manifested in the universal mortality of the human race, excite us immediately to fly from sin by repentance, and to the Saviour by faith, that we may obtain a discharge from our guilt, and a title to that glorious resurrection and happy immortality, by which death is swallowed up in victory.

If a single sin deserves such numberless deaths, how amazing must be the desert of all our sins, and how amazingly will this desert be increased, if to all our other sins we add this, the greatest of all sins, an obstinate and contemptuous rejection of the Saviour! His death is an atonement for other sins; But what other atonement will you find for the

sin of finally refusing this? If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; but a fearful looking for of judgment.

3. Our subject may give us some faint ideas of the grandeur of the final judgment.

The scripture assures us, that, as there will be a righteous judgment, so it will be *universal*, extending to all, to quick and dead, to bond and free, to great and small. That earth and sea will give up their dead, that all who are in their graves shall come forth, and those who are alive, and remain, will be collected with them before the throne of the Son of God, who will render to every one according to the deeds done in the body. On that great day, what an amazing multitude will be assembled! Not merely the people of a particular country, not only the numerous millions, which now swarm on the globe, not only the countless myriads, which have peopled it for nearly six thousand years past; but all who shall be called on this stage, in the unknown succession of future generations, till time shall be no more. *These*, *all* these shall be collected in one grand assembly, to attend their final trial, hear their righteous sentence, and receive their eternal destination. Yea, not only the human race, but those legions of evil spirits, which left their first habitation, and are now reserved in chains, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day, will then be brought forth, and adjudged to the full measure of their torments. And to add to the majesty and solemnity of the scene, thousands of thousands, ten thousand times ten thousand, an innumerable company of angels, will give their attendance, and wait around the fiery throne, as ministering spirits, to testify their approbation of the equity of the process, and carry into execution the orders of the Judge.

The contemplation of this great and awful judgment, at which we must assuredly make our appearance, and in which we shall have an infinite concern, may justly fill us with amazement, awaken our most solemn attention, and make us careful what manner of persons we are.

Beware of hypocrisy; for there is nothing covered, which shall not be revealed. Be afraid of secret sins, for these will be brought into judgment. The hidden things of darkness will be exposed in the light, and the counsels of all hearts made manifest before the assembled world.

4. How vain and trifling are our earthly interests and possessions!

We are only pilgrims, passengers, transient, fugitive mortals. The generations of men are passing in quick succession, and there is no abiding. What have we in this world, that can be worth the name of property?—What folly to be anxious about our worldly condition; or to take much thought what we have, or what we want, what we get, or what we lose?

How many millions have lived in this world, each of whom had something which he called his own! What struggles and contests have there been about this tract of territory, and that spot of ground, this lump of ore, and that glittering stone! The same worldly and contentious spirit remains. We have our respective claims, right or wrong. One boasts of his superiority; another complains of his want: One despises a poor neighbour; another envies a rich one: One sacrifices ease and conscience to gain more wealth; another, to gratify vanity and lust, spends what his father gained.

How busy are mankind; and yet how trifling their designs and pursuits! But soon death breaks all their purposes, and frustrates the thoughts of their heart. In a few days, we who now live, shall

have as little concern with the world, as those who lived before the flood. What one calls *his*, and another calls *his*, soon will belong neither to the one nor the other, but to some successor, as mortal as himself, who must again leave it to the man who comes after him; and he still is mortal. Thus it passes from mortal to mortal, till it shall be lost in the wreck of nature.

Learn then to moderate your worldly affections. Be patient in want, beneficent in fulness, contented whether in fulness or want. Place your affections on things above, and lay up durable riches in the heavenly world, where, on your arrival, you will find them secure, and ready for enjoyment.

5. Our subject teaches us, what reason we have to pity, console and succour the afflicted.

A world of mortality must be a world of sorrow. Here is not only pain and distress of body; but, that which is often more painful and distressing, the loss of most pleasant and intimate friends, on whom the bigger half of life's joys depended. When a mortal, in the midst of his expected days, is torn from his near connexions, how many hearts bleed with the wound. There you will see a solitary companion, and here disappointed parents; helpless offspring on one hand, and weeping brethren on the other. The fall of such a man, like the fall of an uprooted tree, spreads wide ruin around, and rifles the bloom of all who are near.

When we see, what we often see, numbers distressed by the death of one, let us reflect, that their distress may soon be ours. The man, who died last, was not the only one who was mortal. Every man must draw after him, as there are innumerable before him. We have not a friend on earth, who is not as mortal as he was, not a friend on earth, but may soon leave us in sorrow and anguish. Let us then bring home to our hearts the sorrow of our

neighbours, take a sensible share in it, and remember those who are in bonds, as bound with them; and those who suffer adversity, as being ourselves also in the body.

6. We are taught the danger which attends too strong a reliance on earthly friends.

Every man must go down to the grave. Cease then from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of. Trust in the Lord forever, for with him is everlasting strength.

The loss of friends, is a call from heaven to raise our thoughts and affections there. When our earthly dependence sinks under us, we must lean more fully on the power and wisdom, the mercy and faithfulness of God. In him we must seek our comfort in every adversity. The world, which is itself so full of trouble, cannot be a source of comfort in trouble. Our comfort we must seek in another place; our refreshments we must draw from another fountain. A settled persuasion, that a God of infinite wisdom, power and goodness, governs the world; that he orders all events, and extends his care to all creatures; that we are interested in his favour; and, all things, under his direction, will work for our good; that heavenly joys will soon recompence all our earthly sorrows; this is the only sure principle of comfort, hope and courage, in our worldly afflictions.

Let us then be quickened to a life of undissembled religion, which is necessary to our comfortable passage through this world, and our happy entrance into a better.

Religion exempts no man from affliction, or from death; but it does more; it gives him substantial comfort in affliction, and sure preparation for death, and thus turns both to his advantage.

Since religion is so supremely necessary, life so precarious, and death so surely approaching, let us call off our thoughts from this world, and direct them to our future and everlasting concerns. This is the dictate of reason, of scripture, and of providence. Let us realize human frailty, pity those in adversity, and stand prepared for similar trials. Let not the prosperous flatter themselves, that they never shall be moved, nor the young and vigorous imagine, that their mountains stand strong. The day is hastening, when the strong must bow themselves. Health, strength, youth, and vigour, when death approaches, can make no resistance. Virtue, usefulness, helpless dependents, and weeping, praying friends, cannot procure an exemption from the grave.

Whatever your hands find to do, do it with your might; there is no work in the grave, whither ye are going. Let your repentance be speedy, that death may not prevent it; let your hope be well founded, that death may not disappoint it; and let it be improved, and confirmed by the constant exercise of piety, that your departure may be comfortable, your entrance into heaven abundant, and your reward rich and glorious.

SERMON XXV.

Reflections on Harvest.

JEREMIAH, v. 24.

Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter rain in his season: He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

AMONG the many instances of the great corruption and degeneracy of the Jews, enumerated in this chapter, one of the plainest, is their inattention to, and disregard of, the constant government of God's providence, when there were the most obvious and familiar proofs of it daily before their eyes. They paid their devotions to inanimate idols and imaginary divinities, and renounced the worship and service of that almighty and most glorious Being, whose hand created, and still sustains, the whole frame of nature, and whose goodness supplies the wants of every living creature.

"Hear this, O foolish people," says God by his prophet, "a people without understanding, who have eyes, and see not; who have ears, and hear not:—Fear ye not me?—Will ye not tremble at

my presence, who have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; and though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?"

The restraint of the ocean, that tumultuous body of waters, which the Jews, living near the Mediterranean, had frequent opportunities to observe, is often mentioned in scripture, as an effect of God's watchful providence, and an evidence of his mighty power. This is selected from among the numerous proofs of God's government, not because it is more immediately his work, but because the grandeur and majesty of the scene strikes the mind with a deeper and more awful sense of his continual superintending influence, than most other appearances in the natural world.

The direction of the seasons, the interchanges of rain and sunshine, and the timely returns of harvest, are, if not so grand, yet as plain and convincing proofs of God's providence, as the control of the ocean. To this God appeals in the text, and complains, that while his people partook of his bounty, they regarded not his hand. "But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart: They are revolted and gone; neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord, who giveth us rain, the former and latter rain in his season, and reserveth to us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

There is frequent mention of the *former*, and the *latter* rain. The one came on just after seed time; the other, not long before harvest, and is called, "the latter rain of the first month," or the month in which harvest began. The fruitfulness of the season depended much on these rains, which seem to have been periodical in that country. If either of them failed the harvest was small.

The message contained in this chapter, was probably delivered to the people about the time of harvest. In some preceding years, the crops had been cut short by unfavourable weather, as well as by the incursions of enemies. It is said, in the third and fourth chapters, that for the wickedness of the people, "the showers had been withheld, and there had been no latter rain, all the birds of heaven were fled, and the fruitful field was become a wilderness." The failure of the harvests, in seasons past, had given them anxious apprehensions for the next. But having, beyond all expectation, received timely rains, they beheld their fields covered with corn, and their pastures clothed with flocks. And yet they remained as regardless of the divine government as before: Neither, said they, let us NOW fear the Lord, who gives us rain in season, and bestows upon us the rich, but unexpected blessings of harvest.

There are two observations suggested to us in our text.

I. That the regular return of harvest is a demonstration of the existence and providence of God.

II. That the time of harvest naturally calls us to pious meditations and reflections.

I. The regular return of harvest is an obvious proof of the existence and providence of God.

The Jews, who, with this evidence before their eyes, feared not God, are called "a foolish people, and without understanding.

The fruits of the earth, so necessary to the support of animal life, depend on causes beyond the reach of human power. Our labour in the culture of the soil, is useless and vain without a friendly disposition of the seasons. But in the direction of the seasons, we can have no more influence than in the creation of worlds. There is nothing within the sphere of human agency, that in the least con-

tributes to hasten or restrain the showers of heaven, to increase or moderate the heat of the sun, to continue or change the course of the winds. The whole management of the natural world is in hands superiour to ours, in the hands of an invisible, almighty Being. The invisible things of God are not more clearly seen from the creation of the world, than from the productions of nature. Had we been present, when God laid the foundation of the earth, we could not have had more convincing evidence, than what we now have in the stated returns of seed time and harvest, that there is a Being who fills, sustains, and rules the universe, who is above all, through all, and in us all.

The prophet remarks, that God reserves to us the *appointed weeks* of harvest.

That we may order our affairs with discretion, the world is governed by general, established laws. If the seasons should be thrown into confusion, or their regular succession frequently interrupted, there would be an end of human prudence and activity: We could never judge how to plan and pursue our business; when to sow our seed, or look for a harvest; and what provision to make, in one season, for our support till the return of the next. But as the system of God's government is uniform and steady, or subject only to small and occasional variations, we are able to form and prosecute our necessary designs with success.

We see that the seasons are ordered with wisdom superiour to ours. If we had power to influence them, yet we have not skill to guide them. Experience convinces us, how erroneously we have judged: But all our experience has not enabled us to judge perfectly for the future. A plentiful harvest often follows seasons, which to us appeared unfavourable; and the fruits of the earth as often are cut short after promising prospects. There are

many things in the natural world, so entirely out of our sight, that it is impossible for us to determine the manner in which it is best the seasons should be ordered. The weather, which we think unkind, may be necessary to the removal or prevention of evils, unknown to us, which might be fatal to the fruits of the earth:—That which is unfriendly to particular soils, may be adapted to general fertility: That which produces a scanty harvest, in one season, may conduce to the fruitfulness of succeeding years.

Harvest, in its appointed weeks, teaches us the goodness of God.

"He has not left himself without witness, in that he does good, gives us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and fills our hearts with food and gladness." We learn God's goodness from the effects of it, which we behold; and the blessings of it, which we enjoy. When we see a man of wealth dispersing abroad his charities among the indigent, we admire the goodness of his heart, and rejoice in his ability. Much greater evidence have we of the goodness of God, "who causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man; who gives to the beast his food, and to man wine which cheers, and bread which strengthens his heart; who crowns the year with blessings, and whose paths drop fatness."

God has made us dependent on his care for all our supplies; and our necessary supplies he gives us, while we trust his care in the exercise of prudence and industry. "Trust in the Lord and do good: So shalt thou dwell in the land, and shalt be surely fed."

That divine promise, delivered to the world four thousand years ago, that "seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, shall not cease," we see continually verified; and hence we learn,

that the God who governs the world, is constant to his word. If particular countries have, at times, felt the distresses of famine, yet of seed time and harvest there has never been such a *general* failure, as looked like an infraction on the truth of this ancient promise. Every harvest is a new instance of God's faithfulness, a new performance of his promise, and a new encouragement to our faith in his providence and word.

As the return of harvest gives us such immediate sensible evidence of the existence, providence, wisdom, bounty, and faithfulness of God; so,

II. It naturally calls us to pious meditations and reflections.

It was an instance of great stupidity in the Jews, that they said not, "Let us now fear the Lord, who reserveth to us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

1. The seasons are so ordered, as to remind us of the *shortness of human foresight.*

From past experience we expect a harvest in its appointed weeks: And rarely is our expectation frustrated. But the event is not always adjusted to the measure of our hopes. It often falls short, and often exceeds them. That rain and sunshine are necessary to the fruitfulness of the earth, we know by constant observation. But what proportion of drought and moisture, of heat and cold, is most friendly to vegetation, and most conducive to plenty, is a matter in which we often misjudge. The management of the seasons, however, is in unerring hands. Rational beings, in the care of infinite wisdom and goodness, are always safe, while they proceed in the line of their duty; and never ought they to indulge anxiety. With him who governs futurity, they may calmly trust all events. "Take no thought for your life," says the divine Saviour, "what ye shall eat, or drink, or put on. Behold the fowls of the air; they neither sow, nor reap,

nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.—Are ye not much better than they? Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and these things shall be added."

2. Our *dependence* is apparent, as in many other things, so especially in the return of harvest.

Now we see the fruits of the earth brought to maturity, and provision made for our support through the succeeding year. This is not the work of man, but of the great Governour of Nature, whose bountiful designs nothing can defeat. Our industry and prudence must do their part; but it is God alone who succeeds our labours. The friendly showers, and the quickening sunbeams are not under our command. Hail storms, mildews, and devouring insects, are not subject to our will. If God send his blessing, none can revoke it. If he withhold his smiles, our toil is fruitless. If he commissions storms or winds, frosts or insects, to lay waste our fields, our hopes are cut off. "These things are turned about by his counsels, that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world."

At the time of harvest, it becomes us to reflect how insufficient we are to perfect our own designs, or to prevent the evils which may defeat them; and thus learn, in all our ways, to acknowledge God.

3. The scripture speaks of harvest as a season of *gratitude* and *joy*.

To express the happiness of mankind under the kingdom of the Messiah, the prophet says, "They joy before thee as the joy of harvest." By the same allusion the Psalmist describes the felicity of the Jews in their national deliverance from captivity.—"They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,

bringing his sheaves with him." Particular festivals were instituted in the divine law, to be observed as testimonies of gratitude for the blessings of harvest. "Thou shalt keep the feast of harvest, the first fruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in thy field, and the feast of ingathering in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field, none shall appear before me empty. The first fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of God."

We are daily loaded with benefits, which call for daily returns of gratitude. But harvest is such a rich and plentiful blessing, as we cannot every day receive. This is given only in the *appointed weeks*. If it should then fail, famine, distress, and mortality, must ensue; for according to the settled course of nature, it can no more be procured, till the stated period returns. No wisdom or power of man can hasten it. Such a blessing, so evidently from a divine hand, so necessary to human support, and so absolutely beyond our command, ought to be received with fervent sentiments, and lively expressions of thanksgiving and joy. With what a flow of gratitude the Psalmist comes before God on such an occasion as this! "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion. Unto thee shall the vow be performed, Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to rejoice. Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it. Thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly. Thou settlest the furrows thereof, and makest them soft with showers. Thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the vallies also are

covered over with corn; they shout for joy; they also sing."

4. Harvest teaches us *diligence* and *frugality*. This is heaven's reward to human industry. "The earth by the blessing of God, brings forth herbs, meet for them by whom it is dressed."

God supplies our wants, not by an *immediate* providence, but by succeeding our prudent labours. According to the ordinary course of his providence, "he becometh poor, who dealeth with a slack hand, but the hand of the diligent maketh rich." —"He who will not plow by reason of the cold, shall beg in harvest, and have nothing."

Every returning harvest is a fresh reward of the husbandman's labours, and a new encouragement to future industry.

Various are the circumstances under which God places mankind; but in regard of his blessing on their prudent labours, he treats them with an equal hand. This is what no man can engross to the prejudice of another; but all may alike enjoy. There are some less important things, which God permits men to appropriate. One may possess a more extensive tract of soil than his neighbours: He may call distant lands his own, which he has never seen; and which his sons will not see after him: He may claim more numerous herds and flocks, or count over larger parcels of shining metal, than most others can acquire, or than he himself can use. But the grand things on which life and happiness depend, God has not trusted to human disposal. He keeps them in his own hands, and distributes them with equal bounty. Rain, air, and sunshine, are alike free to all. The rain falls in as bountiful showers, and the sun shines with as lively beams on the poor man's garden, as the rich man's manor. The air as sweetly refreshes, and the winds as kindly fan the peasant, as the prince. How poor soev-

er one may be in regard to those trifles, in which property consists, he has as ample a share in the great bounties of Providence, as sure a prospect of God's blessing on his labours, as high encouragement to industry in his calling, as the wealthiest possessor on the globe.

Harvest calls to frugality, as well as industry.

Blessings bestowed by a divine hand, are to be used according to the divine will. Those precious fruits of the earth, which are dealt out only at certain seasons, and which, by no art or industry of man, can at other seasons be obtained, should be applied to honest and virtuous purposes; not wastefully consumed in criminal indulgences. What would you think of a beggar, who immediately perverts to intemperance the charitable allowance made him for his necessary subsistence? The same must you think of those, who by a prodigal mispense of the blessings of one harvest, reduce themselves to want before the return of another.

5. Harvest inculcates *benevolence.*

Religion consists in an imitation of God's moral character, especially of his diffusive and disinterested goodness. Fruitful seasons are instances of his goodness, and calls to imitate him by doing good to those around us. "Give to him who asketh of thee," says our Saviour, "and from him who would borrow of thee, turn not thou away, Do good, that ye may be the children of your Father, who is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."

The system of nature gives us daily lectures on benevolence. The world subsists by a reciprocation of benefits, and interchange of kindnesses. The clouds send down, in showers, the water, which by gentle exhalations they receive from the

earth. By the medium of rains, the sea remits, to recruit the streams, that water which they had poured into his bosom. The air, by its constant motion, agitates the herbs and flowers of the field, and thus quickens the circulation of their fluids, and contributes to their growth. The flowers and herbs, thus moved and enlivened, emit their balsamick sweets to perfume and enrich the air. The sun sheds his beams on the earth and other revolving worlds; these reflect his beams, which, after various repercussions from globe to globe, may return back to their source, and yield their assistance to repair his perpetual wastes. Man bestows his labour on the soil; and, the soil repays his labour by the sustenance which it gives him. He employs the beasts in his service, and, in his turn, he serves the beasts with that food, which they alone could not procure for themselves. This is the constitution of nature; and, What can be its moral design, but to teach men their obligation to promote each other's happiness, the happiness of society, and of the race, by mutual offices of kindness? The bodies of the system tend toward each other, and move in their orbits, by the great law of attraction. The members of society should be directed in their courses, and drawn to one common centre, the general happiness, by the grand law of benevolence.

6. Harvest reminds us of the *shortness of life*, and calls us to the *diligent improvement of our time.*

How fast one harvest rolls on after another! How swiftly the intervening months have flown away! A few harvests more, and time will have reaped the earth of all its present growth, and a new one will succeed. As one harvest follows another, so passes one generation of mortals, and another comes. Let harvest then awaken our attention to the future world, and excite our speedy prepara-

tion for that happy clime, where seasons no more walk their rounds, and age no more succeeds to age; where the blest inhabitants abide secure, and whatever numbers enter still there is room; where one perpetual summer smiles, immortality glides in a constant stream, the trees of life are always verdent, and yield their fruits every month; where will be no more toilsome labour, poisonous curse, nor wasting disease; but life, without decay; fulness, without fear or want; rest, without interruption; and joy, without mixture of grief.

Harvest is an industrious season. When this calls, time is precious. It is always precious. We have a business before us which loudly demands our diligence. Harvest is the time to provide for approaching winter. Life is the time to prepare for the eternal world. Lay up for yourselves a good treasure against the time to come. Provide for yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in heaven, where neither moths corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. How industriously you labour for the meat which perishes! How anxious you appear to sustain a body, which, after all you can do, is mortal still! Rather labour for the meat, which endures to eternal life, the meat which alone can nourish the immortal soul. Food and raiment are needful for the body; seek them you may; but rather seek the kingdom of God, and these things will be added.

7. Harvest should be a season of *self examination.*

We are God's husbandry. Much has he done for us.—What could he have done more?—Have we answered his cost? When we see our fields fruitful under our culture, it is proper to inquire—Whether we are as fruitful under the culture of the divine hand?—Whether we have abounded in the fruits of righteousness, in proportion to the bless-

ings which we have received from heaven? If we bear no fruit, we shall soon be rejected. God has let us alone this year. But behold, the ax is laid to the root of the trees; every tree that beareth not good fruit, will be hewn down and cast into the fire. The field, which bringeth forth herbs, meet for him by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. But that which beareth thorns and briars, is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.

Lastly. Harvest reminds us of our obligation to *faith* and *patience*

We have a kind of natural faith, which, standing on the ground of past experience, looks forward with expectation of a future harvest. Let Christians, enlightened by Revelation, look beyond this world to things unseen; and, relying on the promise, truth, and grace of God, anticipate the blessings of the heavenly state. In full persuasion of the glory revealed, let them patiently endure the trials, and cheerfully perform the duties, allotted them in the present world. Let them not be weary in welldoing, but abound in the work of the Lord, knowing, that in due time, they shall reap, if they faint not; and if they sow bountifully, they shall reap also bountifully.

They have need of patience, that, after they have done the will of God, they may inherit the promises. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, till he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the lord draweth nigh. God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith, your labour of love, and your patience of hope: Give diligence, therefore, to the full assurance of hope to the end; and be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience, inherit the promises.

SERMON XXVI.

The Fearfulness of our Frame illustrated and improved.

PSALM, cxxxix. 14.

I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

THAT we are *wonderfully* made, we are immediately convinced, whenever we contemplate our frame.

What a variety of parts are formed, and of uses designed within the compass of a human body? How exactly is every part adapted to its purpose, and one part adjusted to another? All the parts of this complex body are created and nourished from the same earth; and yet how various is their texture and consistence? How firm and solid the bones, how soft and pliant the flesh, how tough and flexible the muscles, how fine and feeling the nerves, how quick and lively the organs of sensation, how promptly the limbs obey the dictates of the will?

Wonderful is the structure of the vessels, which receive and distribute the nutriment, convey the blood, and carry on the respiration; and no less wonderful is the action of those vessels in performing their respective functions. Mysterious is the

power of that animal motion, on which life depends. That of the *stomach*, *heart* and *lungs* is *involuntary*. We can give no other account of it, than that which the Apostle gives, "In God we live, and move, and have our being." The motion of our *limbs* is indeed *voluntary*; but it is as mysterious as the other. How it is that a mere act of our will contracts or extends the muscles of a leg, arm or finger; and how it is that our volition imparts motion to our own, rather than to any other body, no philosopher, or anatomist can explain.

The mind is still more wonderful than the body. This cannot be an object of sense. It is, however, an object of immediate consciousness. We perceive that there is something within us superior to that gross matter, of which the body consists. We can think, reason and reflect; we can review and contemplate our own thoughts; we can call to remembrance things past, and can look forward and make conjectures on things to come. In our meditations we can, in a moment, pass to distant regions, and to distant worlds, and thence return at our pleasure.

This mind is, in some inexplicable manner, united to the body. It receives all its information by means of the bodily organs. A disorder of body deranges the powers of the mind. Afflictions and sorrows of mind debilitate and waste the body. Hence we know, that there is a union between these constituent parts of man. This union is necessary to the present state; but the nature of it, wherein it consists, how it is preserved, how the soul can act in the body, how it will receive and communicate ideas in a state of separation from the body, we cannot, at present, understand.

That the soul can act in a state of separation, there is no doubt; for we find, that even now the greater part of its exercises are independent of the

bodily senses. It is indeed dependent on these for the *first reception* of its ideas; but when it *has* received them, it can review and compare them, and make deductions from them, without aid from the senses.

We are a mystery to ourselves. We cannot explain the powers, which we possess; nor the motions and actions, which we daily perform. Well may it be said, "We are wonderfully made."

Shall we think it an objection against the credibility of the gospel, that it contains incomprehensible things? We are as incomprehensible to ourselves, as are the profoundest doctrines in revelation. And yet we exist.

But how are we to understand the Psalmist, when he says, "We are *fearfully* made?"

To this enquiry we shall chiefly attend.

1. The expression imports the *dignity* of man in comparison with other creatures in this lower world.

Man is so made, that the *sight* of him impresses a terror on the beasts of the earth. Moses tells us, "God made man in his own image, and gave him dominion over every beast of the earth." When Noah came forth from the ark, God blessed him and his sons, and said, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. And the fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon all that moveth on the earth. Into your hand they are delivered." To the same purpose are the words of the Psalmist; "God made man a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honour, and gave him dominion over the works of his hands, and put all things under his feet."

Many of the animals are superior to man in strength and activity, and armed with weapons of destruction superior to any, which man naturally

possesses for his defence; yet the most ferocious of them will retreat before him. If they ever assault him, it is in some peculiar circumstance; when they are jealous for their young, provoked with wounds, or enraged by hunger. There is something in the human attitude and aspect which strikes them with terror, and restrains their ferocity. Yea, many of the beasts readily submit to man's dominion, and suffer him to employ their superior strength in his service. "Every kind of beasts is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind."

Were it not for this dread of man, which is impressed on the beasts of the earth, we must always stand armed for our defence against them; the wilderness would remain their exclusive habitation; our life would be a state of anxiety and terror; we could neither occupy the fields, nor walk the roads, nor sleep in our houses with safety.

If God has given us dominion over the beasts of the earth, we ought to exercise this dominion with justice and humanity. Noxious and mischievous animals we doubtless have a right to destroy, but never to torture with wanton cruelty. Beasts, which are capable of labour, we may employ in our service, but not treat with passionate severity, or unmerciful rigour. Creatures, whose flesh is nutritive to the human body, we are allowed to slay for food; but not to torment with lingering death. In a word, we may never put any creature to *unnecessary* pain. To do this is morally wrong. It discovers a want of humanity. "A righteous man is merciful to his beast." God, in the law which he gave to the Jews, provided, that the labouring cattle should have their seasons of rest, as well as competent supplies of food. He guarded them against that cruel treatment, which they too often are liable to receive from unfeeling masters.

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If man is made superior to the beasts, he should conduct in a manner becoming his natural superiority. He should show himself a *man*, a rational being. He should exercise a government over himself, restrain his passions, regulate his appetite, keep his body in subjection, cultivate the powers of his mind, look forward to futurity, and act with a serious regard to his eternal existence. David says, "I will instruct and teach thee in the way, which thou shalt go. Be not as the horse or mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near to thee." Reason is the dignity of man. Then only we maintain our dignity, when we act as reasonable beings. If passion and appetite triumph over reason, we lose our superiority to the beast, and become as the horse or mule, which has no understanding.

2. We are *fearfully* made, as our frame demonstrates the *power*, *wisdom* and *presence* of God.

Such a wonderful composition, as man, could not be the effect of chance. It must be the work of an infinite, independent, allwise Creator. David says, "Marvellous are thy works, O God, and that my soul knoweth full well. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect, and in thy book were all my members written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth."

As the frame of our body proves God's agency, so the powers of our mind demonstrate his perfect knowledge. "He who formed the eye, shall not he see? He that planted the ear, shall not he hear? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? He knoweth the thoughts of men."

We, then, carry about with us clear evidence, that there is a God of all perfections; that this God

is present with us, around us and within us; that he observes all our actions, discerns all our intentions, watches all our motions, and will bring into judgment all our works. What a solemn, what a fearful thought! Shall we not tremble at the presence of such a Being? Shall we not tremble at the view of our own frame, which brings this Being to our minds? Well may we adopt the language of the Psalmist; "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down. Thou art acquainted with all my ways. There is not a word in my tongue, but thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me before and behind, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. Whither shall I go from thy presence, or flee from thy spirit? Thou possessest my reins. I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

What stupidity must it be, to live without the belief, and act without the fear of God, when we have in ourselves a continual demonstration of his existence, power, wisdom and providence? The heavens, the earth, the sea, all things around us declare the glory of God and show his handy work. And God demands, "Will ye not tremble at my presence? Ye have a revolting and rebellious heart." But we need not go out of ourselves. Shall we not tremble at his presence, when we see him around us, and feel him within us? He is not far from every one of us. Shall not his excellency make us afraid? Let us fear, love and obey him. This is our whole duty.

3. We are *fearfully* made, as the Creator has impressed upon us evident marks of our *immortality* and *accountableness*.

The distinguishing faculties of our minds demonstrate, that we were created for greater and no-

bler purposes, than the animals around us. It does not appear consistent with God's wisdom and goodness, and with the economy every where observable in his works, that he should make such beings for so low a sphere as the present world, and for so short a duration, as the present life. If our existence is to cease with the death of the body, why has the inspiration of the Almighty given us understanding? If we are designed only to eat, drink and sleep, provide a successor, and then retire to eternal oblivion, of what use is forethought and reflection, moral discernment, and a sense of obligation?

In the present state we find ourselves capable of progress and improvement; but we never rise to the perfection, to which, in a longer space, we might attain. And many of our mortal race are removed, before they have opportunity for any improvement at all. Must there not, then, be another state, in which we may reach the perfection, of which our nature is capable, but which is unattainable here? Instinct in beasts is perfect at first. The young are as sagacious as the old in finding, or constructing their habitations, in seeking and distinguishing their proper food, in retreating from dangers, in taking their prey, in evading or resisting an enemy, and in every thing, which belongs to their sphere of action. In man reason opens gradually, is improved by experience, and assisted by example and instruction, and under proper culture makes observable progress. But before it can reach its end, its progress is arrested by death. Must we not, then, conclude, that there is another state, in which the soul may still push forward, and reach that degree of knowledge and virtue, for which the present life is too short?

There is in all men a desire of immortality; and this desire will doubtless be gratified.

This world is well adapted to our condition, as animals. Every passion and inclination which belongs to our animal nature, and is not a corruption or perversion of that nature, finds an object to gratify it. And shall we suppose, that the desire of immortality has no object?—This would be to suppose, that the works of God are inconsistent and unharmonious. That the desire of immortality is wrought in us by the Creator is evident from its universality. If it were the effect of education, it would not possess all men in all ages and countries, but would be confined to particular persons or places. This argument the Apostle considers, as conclusive. "We *know*, that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house eternal in the heavens; for in this we groan earnestly, *desiring* to be cloathed upon with our house from heaven. Now he who hath wrought us to this selfsame thing is God." This is evident, "for the *whole creation*," or the whole human race, "groaneth and travaileth together."

We carry with us evidence, not only of immortality, but also of *accountableness*. Our reason, with little instruction, sees a difference between virtue and vice. The human mind, indeed, without assistance would make but small improvement in science of any kind, and less in morals, than in some other branches of knowledge. But whenever the difference between moral good and evil is stated, the mind immediately discerns and allows it.

There is in every man a principle of conscience, which, being in any degree enlightened, feels its obligation to avoid the evil and embrace the good. Allowed wickedness is accompanied with remorse; the work of righteousness is peace.

Certainly, then, we are accountable beings, and, in a future state, shall receive according to our

characters. How solemn is the thought, that we are under the eye of a holy God, that we are on probation for his favour, that we are responsible for our actions, that we must exist for ever in another state, and that our condition there will be according to the course which we have pursued here? Does our very *make* teach us these momentous truths? Surely we may say, "We are *fearfully* made."

The same may be said,

4thly, In respect of our *frailty*.

Such is the tenderness of our frame, that in this rough and dangerous world, in which we live, we are always exposed to casualties and wounds, diseases and death. It may therefore, with much propriety be said, "We are *fearfully* made."

The Psalmist prays, "O make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am. Surely every man, at his best state, is altogether vanity." The scripture, to express the vanity and frailty of human life, compares it to a shadow, a flower, dust and wind. The life of man depends on the breath. "God breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul." "When his breath goeth forth, his thoughts perish, and he returneth to his dust." How precarious is our life? It is the breath in our nostrils. It is a puff of air, a vapour which soon vanishes. It is a wind which passes by, and comes not again.

The lungs, which are the instruments of respiration, are a tender and delicate substance. It is a small passage, which conveys the air to the internal parts, and remits it for a fresh supply. This operation must be constant. A short suspension would be death. Many external accidents and internal disorders may occur to obstruct the conveyance of air, or destroy the motion of the lungs.

if we consider only this feeble, but essential part of the animal frame, life must appear precarious. But every part of the body, as well as this, is liable to casualty and disease. In this curious and complicated machine are innumerable threads, vessels and springs, on which motion and activity depend. And a wound or rupture in any of them may, under certain circumstances, be fatal. To casualties we are always exposed in our labours, journeys, diversions and employments. And the causes of disease may every where attend us. The air which we breathe, and the food, which we eat may be charged with death. Who then can at any time say, He is sure of another hour? We are often in such a critical situation, whether we discern it or not, that there is but a step between us and death.

Had we a clear discernment of the dangers, which attend us wherever we go, and of the weakness of the body in which we dwell, we should live in perpetual fear. It is happy for us, that many of our dangers are concealed from us; otherwise, it is probable, we should often be deterred from the necessary occupations of life. But we see enough to convince us, that we are fearfully made. This conviction should awaken our attention to the vast concerns of immortality.

If we are thus fearfully made, let us acknowledge the care of God's providence in our daily preservation. David, impressed with this thought, thus utters his grateful admiration of the mercies, which attended him. "I will praise thee, O God, for marvellous are thy works. How precious are thy thoughts unto me! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with thee."

How carefully should we examine ourselves, that we may know, what preparation is made for the change which is before us, and which may nearly await us? Beings accountable to God, designed for immortality, soon to be removed, and insecure of another day, should not live at uncertainties, should not pass thoughtless along, as if no eye beheld them, and no change were before them. David, in this view of himself, was led to pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts. See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

How vain is the world? What find we here worthy of our supreme affection? It is but *little*, which we need; and a little should content us. If we have much, we must soon leave it, and have no more a portion in it. Nor can we tell how soon the parting time will come. "Our days on earth are a shadow, and there is no abiding." Let us live as strangers; indulge no anxiety about the things of this world, but direct our care to the interest of another.

Our experience of God's care in preserving us till this time, encourages us to trust his goodness still. It is happy that our time is in his hands. Let it be devoted to his service, and it will not be terminated too soon. He can preserve the frame, which he has made, tender as it is; and avert the dangers which surround it, numerous as they are. A life employed for his glory, whether it end sooner or later, will end happily. To the faithful Christian death will be gain.

In the view of human frailty, nothing can appear more reasonable than daily prayer. If our life depends on God's will, to his care let us commit ourselves, and in his hands leave all our concerns. Would a man, who believed this day to be his last, neglect to call upon God? Would he go forth into

the business and company of the world without directing a thought, or addressing a petition to him ?—No man knows on any day, but that it may be his last. Every man, then, on each morning of his life, ought to commend himself to God's protection, through the day to walk in his fear, at the close of day to review what he has done, repent of all his follies, acknowledge the benefits received, and dedicate himself afresh to his great Preserver and Benefactor.

We have the sentence of death in ourselves. Our frame speaks its own frailty, and predicts its own dissolution. One would think, we should need no admonitions, but those which we have from ourselves. We are fearfully made. If we hear not the solemn language of our own frail bodies, the language of weakness and pain, of sickness and decay, what language would command our attention, and impress our hearts ? How unaccountable is the stupidity of mortals ? They complain of infirmities and groan under pains, and yet seem scarcely to know, that these pains and infirmities tell them, that they must die, must pass to another world, must there receive according to the works which they have done.

Let us hear the voice, which speaks within us and around us ; the voice of providence and of scripture, the voice of sickness and of health, the voice of reason and of conscience, the voice which cries, " All flesh is as grass ; what your hands find to do, do it with your might, for there is no work, wisdom, nor device in the grave, to which you are going."

Let religion possess our hearts, and peace will attend our path, and hope will brighten our prospect. We may take pleasure in infirmities, for the power of Christ will rest upon us. For us to live will be Christ, and to die will be gain. Whether life or death, both will be ours.

SERMON XXVII.

The Lawfulness and Obligation of Oaths.

MATTHEW, v. 33—37.

Again, ye have heard, that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths; But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black: But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.

THERE is no institution so good, but that it may be corrupted; nor so plain, but that it may be perverted. Almost every religious institution, which God has made for men, has in process of time undergone, in their hands, some material alteration.

This was remarkably the case among the Jews. The religion which God gave to them, consisted partly of moral, and partly of ritual injunctions. The latter, which were in themselves of smaller importance, and designed to be subservient to the former, were by degrees so multiplied, as to be-

come almost impracticable; and the other were, in proportion, disregarded and laid aside. Mint, anise and cummin were tythed with scrupulous exactness, while weightier matters, justice, mercy, truth and the love of God, were neglected with little concern.

The correction of these abuses is the principal object of Christ's excellent sermon on the mount. In this he recites the words of several precepts, points out the mutilations and corruptions which had been made in them, and then states their true meaning and just extent.

Among other corruptions, he mentions the general abuse, which had been made of the law relating to *oaths*. "Ye have heard, that it hath been said by them," or rather *to* them, "of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself." This the Jews understood as forbidding only *perjury*, or *swearing falsely* by the name of *God*. But Christ tells them, it extended farther, and forbad *all* kinds of *profane* swearing: For these are the words of the law, "Thou shalt not swear by the name of the Lord *falsely*; neither shalt thou *profane* the name of the Lord; and thou shalt not take the name of the Lord *in vain*; neither shall ye make mention of the names of *other gods*." By the law, therefore, they were forbidden, in their ordinary discourse, to swear at all, either by heaven, or earth, or Jerusalem, or their heads; for if they regarded these as the creatures of God, to swear by *them* was to swear by *him*, and to take *his* name in vain. It was to depart from that plainness and simplicity, which religion requires. "Let your communication," your ordinary discourse, "be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil."

There is a passage in James's Epistle similar to, and taken from this precept of our Saviour. "Above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by

heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea, and your nay nay, lest ye fall into condemnation." Our remarks on the former will be applicable to the latter of these passages.

In explaining this precept of our Saviour, I shall, first, shew, that it does not absolutely and universally forbid the use of oaths; secondly, what are the sins which it does forbid; and then shall represent the atrocity of those sins.

First, I shall shew, that Christ's precept does not absolutely forbid all use of oaths. Under this head, I shall be led to prove that oaths, in many cases, are lawful and necessary.

An oath is a solemn appeal to God, as a witness of the *truth* of what we declare, and of our *sincerity* in what we promise. A man equally binds his soul to utter the truth, or perform a promise, whether he speak the words of the oath with his own mouth, or consent to them when he hears them spoken, or acquiesce in, and answer upon the adjuration of another. And the oath, if it respect a thing lawful to be done, is binding, whether it be made explicitly in the name of God, or indirectly by a creature of God; for our Saviour says, "He that sweareth by heaven, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein."

Oaths are of two sorts; *assertory* and *promissory*. An *assertory* oath is the affirmation or denial of any fact in question, with a solemn invocation of God. A *promissory* oath, is an engagement, in the name, of, and by an appeal to God, to do, or not to do a matter proposed or stated. If this engagement be made immediately to God, and respect a personal duty to be performed to him, it is called a *vow*. If the engagement be made to men, and respect some duty, which we owe to our neighbour, or to society, then it is called an *oath*.

Some have supposed, that all oaths are criminal in their nature, and absolutely forbidden in the passage now under our consideration. This is the opinion of a certain sect called *Quakers*, who, however virtuous they may be in their general conduct, are fanciful and enthusiastic in many of their opinions. For they reject the gospel-ministry, vocal prayer, water-baptism, and the Lord's supper, and also the authority of the written word, farther than the meaning of it is communicated to them by a special internal light. Arguments from scripture have little effect on those, who have a supposed light within them superior to scripture. But if we may be allowed to take the scripture in its plain and literal sense, there is no difficulty in proving the sacred obligation of the above mentioned institutions; nor in shewing the lawfulness and obligation of oaths, which is the subject now before us.

That our Saviour does not absolutely forbid, but, in some cases, allow the use of oaths, I shall shew by examining his own words; and by adducing proofs from reason and from many passages of scripture.

1. We will examine our Saviour's words in the text.

Although a part of the paragraph, taken *by itself*, may seem like a universal prohibition of oaths, yet the *whole*, taken in its connexion, shews that a limitation is intended.

It is not uncommon for the scripture to use general expressions, which still are to be understood in a qualified sense. And how to qualify them, other passages and the reason of the case will easily direct us.

Paul says to the Corinthians, "There is utterly a fault among you, that ye go to law with one another. Why do ye not suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" But does the apostle forbid Christians,

in an organized civil society, to make use of the law for the defence of their lives and fortunes? By no means: He only forbids that litigious spirit, which induced many in that day to contend with each other before heathen tribunals, when they might better adjust their differences by mutual concessions, or terminate them by reference to some wise Christian brethren.

Our saviour says, "Resist not evil, but whoso shall smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other." Does he intend, that we shall tamely submit to the outrages of every insolent brute, without any measures for selfpreservation, or for the restraint of violence? This none can imagine. He recommends no more than a general spirit of prudent meekness and forbearance under personal injuries.

He says, "Give to *every one* that asketh of you, and of him that *taketh away* thy goods, *ask them not* again." Must we then give away our whole substance, if any man should be so impudent as to demand it? Or may we never attempt by any means to recover our property, when it is taken from us by theft or robbery? We know, that no more is here commanded, than a ready disposition to do good, according to our abilities, when we meet with those, who appear to be proper objects of our beneficence.

So in the text, (admitting the translation to be correct) when Christ says, "Swear not at all," we are not to conclude, that he disallows and forbids *all* oaths; but such oaths only, as he was then speaking of. The general expression must be so limited, that it may accord with itself, with common reason and the tenor of scripture.

It was the opinion of the Jews, that, in extraordinary cases, they ought to swear by the name of God only; but that, in their familiar communica-

tion, they might swear by heaven, the sun, the earth, the temple, or some other creature, as they pleased; and that such small oaths were not binding. This errour our Lord corrects. "Swear not *at all.*" So Christ's words are rendered: But our English adverb, *at all*, does not accurately convey the sense of the original word; for that properly signifies, *wholly*, *universally*, or *without distinction.* The same word, in the before cited reproof to the Corinthians, is translated *utterly.* "There is *utterly* or *generally* a fault among you, that brother goeth to law with brother before unbelievers, and not before saints." The sense, then, of this whole passage relating to oaths must be as follows, "Ye have heard, that it hath been said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt *perform* thine oaths to the LORD;" for ye think, that oaths made *to* the Lord, and in *his* name, are binding on you. "But I say unto you, Swear not *indiscriminately*," or by *every object*, which comes to mind, as it is your custom to do; "Swear neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by Jerusalem, nor by your lives." And "swear not by any other oath" in your ordinary conversation; "but let your communication;" (He does not say, Let your testimonies, or your official engagements; but let your *communication*, your common discourse) "be yea, yea; nay, nay.

The Jews would have thought it profane to swear by *the name of God* in their ordinary conversation; for oaths, in his name, they allowed to be binding. But Christ tells them, that to swear by *any other* object, in their ordinary conversation, is profane; for *all* oaths are binding. He therefore directs them never to swear by any object, but the great God. Thus common swearing, on their own principles, must cease; for corrupt as they were, they had so much reverence for *Jehovah*, that they

would not use *his* name, in their daily customary oaths.

This is the plain sense of our Saviour's words, taken by themselves.

That he does not absolutely forbid, but, in some cases, allow the use of oaths, will appear,

2. From the reason of the thing, and from many express passages of scripture.

Oaths, in many cases, are really necessary in civil society; and it is doubtful whether society could subsist without them. Men in public office ought to be laid under the most solemn obligations to fidelity. Witnesses, in cases where property, character and life are concerned, ought to feel themselves under the most sacred bonds to declare the whole truth, and the truth only. And to men, who believe a divine moral government, nothing can have such binding force, as an oath. Temporal considerations are of variable influence, and may, under certain circumstances, prove temptations to falsehood and unfaithfulness. But an oath reaches to the heart, and binds the conscience. It recognizes the presence and judgment of God, and will take hold of the inward man. He who under this awful bond, dares to falsify and prevaricate, is little less than an atheist. And to a known atheist no oath ought ever to be administered, and no important trust ought ever to be committed.

Among the ancient Greeks and Romans, and, so far as I know, among all civilized nations, oaths have been judged necessary, and esteemed sacred. In the patriarchal age they were frequently used. They were required by men of distinguished piety, and were required *from* men of reputed probity. Abimelech made Abraham swear, that he would not deal falsely with him. Abraham bound Eliezer with an oath to execute his orders respecting his son's marriage. Laban exacted from Jacob an oath,

that he would treat with kindness the wives which Laban had given him. Jacob caused Joseph to swear, that he would bury him in Canaan. And certainly our Saviour, who came to promote the interests of mankind, did not forbid a usage, which common experience had found necessary to social and personal happiness.

Oaths are undeniably of divine institution. They were inwrought into that government, which God ordained for his favoured people. Cases of doubt and controversy were, by his express command, to be decided by the testimony of persons under oath. The people were by oath to bind themselves to the observance of his laws. They were to swear allegiance to him. And none can suppose, that God would enjoin on them a usage in its own nature sinful. The apostle to the Hebrews speaks of it as a known custom to terminate disputes in this manner. "Men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife." He manifestly speaks of this practice in terms of approbation.

Paul had the mind of Jesus Christ. Did he imagine, that Christ had forbidden the use of oaths? Surely then he would not have used them, as he frequently does, in his Epistles, which were indited by the Holy Ghost. He says to the Romans, "*God is my witness*, that without ceasing I make mention of you in my prayers." The narrative, which he gives the Galatians, of his conversion and apostleship he thus concludes, "Now the things, which I write unto you, behold, *before God* I lie not." When he had given the Corinthians a long detail of his various sufferings in Christ's cause, lest it should seem incredible he thus confirms it; "Now the *God* and *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ *knoweth*, that I lie not." To impress on the minds of these Corinthians a convic-

tion of his affectionate regard for them, he says, "*I call God to record on my soul*, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth." To manifest his ardent love for the Philippians, he says, "*God is my record*, how greatly I long after you." As he thus swears himself, so he also adjures others. He says to the Thessalonians, "I *charge* you," or, as it is in the margin, "I *adjure* you by the Lord, that this Epistle be read to all the holy brethren." Paul certainly judged, that oaths, in some cases, were not only justifiable, but important.

We have still a higher authority, even the example of our divine Lord. And his example never contradicted his doctrine. He says to the Pharisees, "Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given." In the original it is, "*If a sign shall be given* to this generation." This was one of the forms of swearing used among the Jews. It was as much as to say, *God's word is not true*, if such a thing shall, or shall not be done. We have, in scripture, several instances of the use of this form, which is expressly called *swearing*. "The Lord was wroth, and *sware*, saying, *If any of these men shall see the good land.*" "I have *sworn* in my wrath, *If they shall enter into my rest.*"

Another instance of Christ's approving of an oath we have in his examination before the high priest. The questions put to him he several times refused to answer: "Then the high priest arose and said, *I adjure thee by the living God*, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ." He requested Christ to answer upon his oath. For among the Jews *adjuration* was one form of administring an oath, as is evident from several passages of scripture. It is said in the law of Moses, "If a man hear the voice of *swearing*, or of *adjuration*, and be a witness, whether he have seen, or known such

a thing, if he utter it not, then he shall bear his iniquity." If he be adjured, or required by authority, to answer on oath to any question, and do not utter the truth, he is perjured. To this law Solomon alludes in the book of Proverbs. "Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul. He heareth *cursing*, and *bewrayeth* not." He heareth the *adjuration* of the magistrate, or the *curse* laid upon him to bind him to declare the theft; but he will not *bewray* or discover the suspected fact, because he is partner in it. Thus he perjures and ruins his soul. This is the case, which Agur deprecated. "Give me not poverty, lest I steal, and take the name of my God in vain;" or perjure myself to conceal the theft.

An *adjuration*, we see, was a proper *oath*. Now to the adjuration of the high priest our Lord answered without making any objection, or giving the least intimation, that it was unlawful for him to take, or for the magistrate to administer an oath.

In the books of Daniel, and of the Revelation, angels are introduced lifting up their hands to heaven, andswearing by him who liveth forever and ever, that the great events, which they foretold, should surely be accomplished.

Yea; the great Creator, the everliving God, is often in scripture said to swear by his own life, in confirmation of the promises and threatnings, which he makes to mortals. To establish their faith in his word, he condescends to a usage common among them. If the usage were sinful, it would never have been thus countenanced by a divine example.

God often forbids the Jews either to swear by the heathen divinities, or to swear *falsely* by *his* name; but he never forbids the use of *pious* oaths: Nay; on the contrary, he expressly enjoins them in cases of serious importance; and enjoins them in such

general terms, as apply to all nations, as well as to Jews. "He who blesseth himself in the earth, shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth, shall swear by the God of truth." The words which follow evidently respect the gospel times, or the state of things in the new Jerusalem. "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." Again, God thus speaks to his revolting people; "If thou wilt return, O Israel, return unto me; and thou shalt swear, *The Lord liveth*, in judgment and in righteousness, and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory."

After what has been said, it cannot be alledged, that oaths, though allowed under the mosaic dispensation, were abolished by Christ under his more perfect dispensation; For, it appears, they were not first introduced by Moses; but, long before his day, were practised with divine approbation, and warranted by divine example. They belonged, not to the ceremonial, but the moral law; and by divine appointment they became a part of the civil constitution, under which the Jews were placed.

Christ never relaxed the moral law: This is permanent as heaven. Nor did he alter the civil polity of the Jews: This continued as it was in his day, until the Roman conquest dissolved it. Nor, indeed, did he abolish the ceremonial law, while he was on earth, but observed it himself until the time of his crucifixion. It remained in force, until it was superseded by his new dispensation after his resurrection from the dead.

And besides; had he intended to abolish oaths, in his sermon on the mount, which was delivered early in his ministry, he would not afterward have used them himself. And if they had been contrary to the design of his gospel, the apostles would not

have allowed and practised them under this dispensation.

It appears from what has been said, that oaths, as really as vows and prayers, are of a religious nature; for they are direct appeals to the God of truth and justice—to him who knows the heart, abhors falsehood, and will punish iniquity. An oath then should be administred with solemnity, and taken in the fear of God. It hence follows, that no oath can properly be administred to one, who is a known enemy to religion, and who avows, in word or practice, his disbelief of a divine moral government and of a future retribution; for on him an oath can have no binding force, farther than it exposes him to the penalty of the civil law; and this penalty may as well be annexed to the violation of truth, in matters of testimony, as to the violation of an oath. The sacredness of an oath ought never to be prostituted on an impious character.

Hence it follows in the clearest manner, that religion is the support of civil society, and that without a general sense of, and regard to religion no society can be safe and happy. If oaths are necessary, religion is so, for without this, oaths in themselves have no efficacy. Religion, while it gives power to oaths, adds force also to every social obligation.

It follows farther, that every wise and virtuous member of society will be disposed to encourage by his word and example, and to support by his property the regular exercises of divine worship, because these are essential means of diffusing and preserving a knowledge of God, a sense of his government, a dread of his judgment, and a reverence of his laws; and thus they become the means of promoting social virtue and happiness, and of establishing general security under the administration of civil government. Hence David, describing the char-

acter of a good citizen, says, "He walketh uprightly, worketh righteousness, speaketh the truth in his heart, backbiteth not with his tongue; doth not evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against him. In his eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord; and though he swear to his own hurt, he changeth not."

If oaths are important to the good administration of government, and religion necessary to the efficacy of oaths, then every good government will, in regard to its own security and success, patronize and encourage religion.

It has been thought, and perhaps justly thought, by many serious persons, that, in most communities, oaths have been unnecessarily multiplied; that in some of the smaller offices of society, and in some less important matters of controversy, common responsibility might be sufficient; and that if oaths were not exacted in such cases, they would have greater efficacy in cases of higher importance. For the frequency of them, it is supposed, diminishes the reverence, which ought to be attached to them. This, however, is a question, which concerns the legislator in his official character, rather than the citizen in his private station. In the general principle, perhaps, most will agree; but to draw the line of discrimination may be a matter of difficulty. One thing ought always to be considered, that though the immediate object of an oath may be small, yet the oath itself, being prescribed by law, and demanded by authority, may in this view be really important; because the probable consequences of a refusal under these circumstances, would be dangerous. A thing small in itself, if it be in its nature innocent, becomes weighty, when it is actually required by law; for a non-compliance in smaller instances may lead to disobedience in greater, and thus weaken the authority of

government, and relax the bands of society.—And besides; when we are called to take an oath, especially in matters of controversy between citizens, we are not usually competent judges of the magnitude of the case in question; for we seldom have opportunity to view it in its connexions and consequences. And even the lower offices in society, though small in comparison with others, yet considered in their relation to the good of many, in their influence on the higher grades of office, and in their usual connexion with religion, may be judged important.

I have now fully discussed the first branch of my subject, which was to shew, that oaths, in many cases, may be lawful, and that to prohibit them was not our Saviour's intention in the passage under consideration.

I shall shew, in another discourse, what are the sins here condemned, and represent the atrocity and danger of them.

SERMON XXVIII.

The atrocious Criminality of Perjury and profane Swearing.

MATTHEW, v. 33—37.

Again, ye have heard, that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths; But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black: But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.

A TRULY religious man is one who, being wholly devoted to God, aims to glorify him in all things. As the love and fear of God rule in his heart, so by these his outward conversation is directed. He not only watches over his actions, but takes heed to his words. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The drift of a man's speech indicates the disposition of his mind. Therefore "by our words we shall be justified, or by our words we shall be condemned."

There are various ways in which men offend by word; but none of the offences of the tongue are

more sure indications of a corrupt heart, more prejudicial to morals, and more injurious to the interests of society, than *profane swearing*; the sin condemned in the text. Our Saviour says, "Swear not at all," or by *any* thing, so we render the words; but they properly signify, "Swear not by *every* thing," as the Jews were wont to do in their ordinary discourse. "He that sweareth, let him swear by the God of truth," or the true God.

We have shewn, in a former discourse, that our Saviour, in the words now read, does not forbid swearing, absolutely and upon all occasions, that the words themselves in fair construction will not admit this sense, and that many other passages of scripture necessarily exclude it. The example of God himself, of Jesus Christ, of angels, of the patriarchs, prophets and apostles; and the plain commands and institutions of the supreme lawgiver, make it evident, that, on some great and important occasions, oaths may, and ought to be used. This is agreeable to the sense of all civilized nations, especially of nations favoured with divine revelation. Nor do I know of any who deny it, but such as refuse to admit the authority of the written word in its plain literal acceptation.

An oath is a solemn appeal to God for the truth of what one declares, or for his own sincerity in what he promises. He therefore who takes an oath must be supposed to believe the being and perfections of God, his moral government and a future retribution; and to feel in his mind some reverence of the supreme majesty. Otherwise his oath adds no credit to his word. Absurd is it therefore to impose an oath on a man of atheistical principles, on one who denies all future punishment; or on one of notorious impiety; for such a person feels no obligation from it.

By the Jewish law great care was taken to guard against false testimony, especially in cases where life was concerned. When one was accused of a capital crime, the matter was to be examined by the Judges with diligence, and the verification of it was to depend on the testimony of two or three reputable witnesses; and that the sincerity of the witnesses might appear as fully as possible, their hands were to be first on the condemned person to put him to death; for if they would not venture to be his executioners, it was presumed, they had spoken falsely, and their hearts, in this serious moment, misgave them.

To this rule in the divine law our Saviour alludes in his answer to those who brought to him a woman taken in adultery. They tell him, The law of Moses ordained, that such should be stoned, and ask, what was *his* opinion. He says, "Let him who is *without sin* among you *first* cast a stone at her." He plainly signifies, that unless *they* were free from notorious violations of the law, their testimony, by the law itself, could not be a just ground of her condemnation; for by the law none are admitted as witnesses to condemn another, who are themselves involved in the same guilt. The accusers felt the force of our Lord's reply, and retired with conviction and shame.

It being manifest, that oaths, in some great and important cases, are not only lawful, but necessary, and are both allowed and *enjoined* by divine authority, we cannot understand our Saviour as giving an unlimited prohibition of them. It will be *asked* then, What does he prohibit?

The answer to this question is the second part of our subject.

1. He condemns *perjury*.

This is in scripture forbidden in express terms and under awful comminations. "Thou shalt not

swear by God's name *falsely*. The Lord will not hold him *guiltless*, that taketh his name *in vain*. A *curse* shall enter into the house of him that sweareth *falsely*, and shall consume it."

Men may incur the guilt of this sin in various ways, by asserting on oath that which they know to be false, by suppressing that which they have sworn to declare, by promising under oath to do that which they have no intention to perform, by positively affirming that which is doubtful in their own minds, by using equivocal and indeterminate expressions to disguise the truth, and by neglecting that which they have voluntarily bound themselves to do, when they are laid under no providential disability.

False swearing is in no case more criminal, than when men are called to bear testimony before proper authority. In this case, it is such a complication of villainy, injustice, impiety and impudence, such a prostitution of conscience, such an opposition to the great end of public judicatures, that no language can sufficiently express the atrocity of it. The divine law gives repeated and solemn cautions against this sin. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause. Put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness." In case a person is detected in a false testimony, the law of Moses orders, that on him shall be inflicted the same punishment, as would have been inflicted on the accused, if he had been convicted. "If a false witness rise up against any man, and testify against him that which is wrong, the judges shall make diligent inquisition; and behold if the witness be a false witness, and have testified falsely against his brother, then shall ye do to him, as *he* thought to have done to his brother."

2. Christ here condemns *customary swearing* in common conversation.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but I say unto you swear not at all," in your common discourse, "but let your *communication* be yea, yea; nay, nay." His meaning is, that in our ordinary affairs we ought not to interpose oaths, and make familiar appeals to the Deity under pretence of shewing our sincerity or resolution, but content ourselves with a simple affirmation or negation, which in common cases will be sufficient, if the speaker be a man of credit; and if he be not such, his oath will be but a slender confirmation.

The divine name is too sacred to be used in vain; and in vain it is used, when it is wantonly appealed to in matters which are not important enough to deserve, nor doubtful enough to need a confirmation of this solemn kind.

This species of profaneness is still more horrible, when divine things are tossed about in sport without thought or meaning; especially when oaths and imprecations are made vehicles for the conveyance of those malignant passions, which are criminal in their nature, and ought to be suppressed in embryo.

This customary profaneness indicates an habitual disregard to the Deity; for it is impossible, that a man, impressed with a reverence of God's sacred character, should wantonly affront him by a trifling or passionate use of his great and dreadful name. And as it proceeds from habitual irreverence of God, so it soon extinguishes the faint sentiments of piety, which may still remain. Thus by removing the fear of God and of a future judgment, it opens the way for every kind of impiety and wickedness. It directly leads to perjury; for the man who swears frequently, will often swear

carelessly, without attention to what he says, and without concern whether it be true or false.

People sometimes plead in their excuse, that they were provoked to passion. But in such a case it is peculiarly dangerous to use an oath; for passion always misrepresents things. We can never see objects in a clear and steady light, when our minds are violently agitated. And to venture on an oath in a state of mind, in which it is hardly safe to speak at all, is most presumptuous rashness.

This sin is the more inexcusable, because there can be no external temptation to it. To injustice and intemperance there may be some natural allurements: but to profanity there are none.

It gives no confirmation to one's word; but rather renders it suspicious and doubtful. It is no grace to his conversation, but a horrible deformity. It is no evidence of his politeness, but a proof of his ill breeding; besure if he belch out his impious language in serious, grave, well-bred company. You would think it a breach of good manners for one to divert a company, in which you were present, by telling ludicrous stories concerning your parents and relations. Is it less so, to affront the ears of the pious by insulting their God?

It is no proof of one's acquaintance with the world: It only shews, that he has been so unhappy as to converse with some of the worst men in the world, and so silly as to learn the worst of their manners.

It is no evidence of superior courage, but rather of fool-hardiness. Courage appears in a resolution to do our duty under all circumstances. But to offend God through fear of men is weakness and cowardice. To run into danger without occasion is infatuation and madness.

3. As we may not use the *divine* name wantonly and vainly; so neither may we swear by *any thing*

else; for to swear by the creatures of God is as real profaneness, as to swear rashly by God himself.

"Swear not," says the Apostle, "neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath; but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay." Our Saviour says, "Swear not at all," or indiscriminately; "neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king; nor by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black; but let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay."

Some seem to imagine, that those minced and disguised oaths, in which the name of their maker is not expressly used, may be innocent. But the gospel guards against this self-deception. It allows no kind of *customary* swearing either by God or his creatures.

The Jews made a distinction of oaths according to the objects appealed to in them. They said, "If a man sware by the temple, or by the altar, it was nothing; but if he sware by the *gold* of the temple, or by the *gift* on the altar, he was bound." But our Saviour tells them, This is a blind and foolish distinction; "For," says he, "which is greater, the gold, or the temple which sanctifieth the gold; the gift, or the altar which sanctifieth the gift? Therefore, whosoever shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it and by all things thereon; and whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein; and he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon."

Our Saviour here shews, that it makes no material difference, in point of obligation, whether we swear by God or the creature; for to swear by the creature is indirectly to swear by him whose creature it is. Every oath is in its nature a solemn ap-

peal to the object by which it is made, and an invocation of that object to be a witness of the truth, or an avenger of the falsehood of the declaration. If he who swears by a creature mean, under that name, to swear by the Creator, it is the same thing as if he sware by the name of God himself. If he mean to swear by the creature in distinction from God, then he treats that creature as God. Religious swearing is an act of adoration, and an adoration of any creature is idolatry. Swearing by the heathen deities is owning them as real Divinities. Swearing by one's life, which is at God's disposal, if it be not swearing by him, is assuming independence and bidding defiance to him.

God often condemns the impiety of the Jews in swearing by their idols, by baal, malchom and the calves of Dan and Samania. He says, "He that sweareth in the earth, shall swear by the God of truth." This kind of customary swearing, of which we are speaking, is of the same nature with that, which God condemns in the Jews.

You will say, "We do not mean to own these creatures as Deities." What then?—You treat them as such. And will you swear without a meaning? Suppose one should make a *prayer* to a creature, to the sun, the moon, or one of the constellations; would you think he well excused himself by saying, he did not mean to *pray* to that object; but only used a form of prayer in merriment?—He treats the object as if he thought it divine. If he believe it is so, he is an idolater; if not, he is abominably profane in sporting with so sacred an exercise as prayer. There is the same impiety in swearing by a creature, as in praying to a creature. One is a solemn act of worship, as well as the other. Custom may have led some to think there is a difference. But reason has made none, and the scripture makes none. As men of

reason and honesty, as professors of Christianity, as followers of him in whom was no guile, we are bound ever to use a plainness of speech, to have our communication, yea, yea; and nay, nay. We should maintain such a simple and artless conversation, and be so far removed from fraud and duplicity, as never to give ground of suspicion, that our designs are dishonest. Then, in ordinary cases, our bare word may be sufficient; and in the most important cases our oaths will be regarded.

4. Under the name of swearing, our Saviour condemns all rash *imprecations;* such as profane people use, either in passion, or in levity, by wishing, or *saying* they wish temporal, or eternal evil to themselves or others. If such imprecations be accompanied with a real desire, that the evil may take place, they discover a hellish impatience, envy and malice in those who utter them; and the most impious and horrible apprehensions of God, as if he were such a wanton, capricious being as themselves. If the evil be not desired, here is an insolent and presumptuous mockery of his justice and goodness.

5. In this prohibition may be included all *scoffing* at religion, and *contempt* of the worship of God; all *sporting* with passages of sacred scripture, and jocular applications of them to enliven vain mirth and help out a foolish jest.

Religion is so necessary to the peace and welfare of mankind in the present life, and gives such pleasing hopes with respect to futurity, that even though the evidence of its truth were doubtful, a reasonable man would not find in his heart to mock at it. On the contrary, he would feel a regard to so benevolent a scheme, would examine it with attention, and would wish it might prove to be true. But for men who profess the belief of it, to mock

its most solemn parts—the death of a Saviour for the sins of men, his appearance to judge the world, and the final distribution of rewards and punishments, is such madness and presumption, as we should not think men capable of, had there never been instances of the kind. Such scoffers, the scripture foretels, shall come in the last days; but it describes them as walking after their own lusts, and as having their consciences seared with a hot iron.

You have seen what sins are included in the swearing which our Lord condemns. Attend a moment to some arguments and considerations suited to dissuade you from all sins of this kind. The Apostle says, "*Above all things* swear not." He signifies that profane swearing is one of the greatest of all sins. And so certainly it is. It is a direct insult on Almighty God, a daring affront to his supreme majesty, an insolent defiance of his justice and power; and a wanton trifling with one's own salvation.

It is a complication of many sins, such as impiety to God and contempt of his authority; the abuse of speech, that distinguishing faculty of man, unbelief in heart, a disregard to, if not a real disbelief of the providence, word and judgment of God. In perjury there is always falsehood and injustice, and often higher crimes; there may be murder. In the lower kinds of profaneness there is levity, passion, indecency, rudeness and brutality of manners.

Profane language is a sure evidence of a bad disposition of mind. It proceeds from a stupid, atheistical heart, or from some malignant feeling.

It tends to produce still greater hardness, to extinguish all reverence for God and sacred things, and thus to introduce all other sins.

It is of all sins the most pernicious in its consequences. Common profaneness leads to perjury, and thus weakens the social security, which depends much on the efficacy of oaths.

Profaneness, though unreasonable and without apparent temptation, is yet exceedingly infectious. By this, one sinner destroys much good.

The profane swearer is heaping guilt on his soul. If for every *idle* word, which men speak, they must give an account, how heavy will be the account, and how awful the punishment of that man, who daily *multiplies* his *impious* and *profane* words!

The case of such a man is the more dangerous, because he defeats the means of repentance. What avails it to tell a man of the wrath of God, when he has banished the fear of God from his mind? What avails it to tell him of death, judgment and damnation, when he can familiarly imprecate these on himself and others? What avails it to tell him of the evil and danger of *this* sin, when he can make a mock of *all* sin?

He who can trifle with the name and perfections of God, can as easily laugh at reproof and admonition. Some great distress and imminent danger may perhaps bring him to consideration; but the calm methods of reason, argument and persuasion will have no effect, in his ordinary state, because he has fortified himself against them. The peculiar dangers of such sinners the Apostle more than intimates, when he says, "Above all things swear not, *lest ye fall into condemnation.*"

God has declared, that he will not hold such persons guiltless, that he will be a swift witness against them, that he will send his curse upon them here, and execute distinguished punishment upon them hereafter.

Let those who have accustomed themselves to this sin, consider the guilt they are bringing on

their own souls, and the inexparable mischief they are doing to the souls of others. Or if these considerations are too grave and serious; at least let them consider, how much better they would be esteemed, and how much more useful they would be in the world, if they would lay aside their impiety, and use only that sober, graceful and sound speech, which cannot be condemned.

Let those who have escaped this iniquity, and particularly the young, realize the shamefulness and danger of it, and learn to look upon it with horror, and on the persons, who practise it, with pity. Let them shun all particular connexions with the profane; and if they are called into the company of such persons, keep their mouth with a bridle.

Let your minds be impressed with a sense of your dependence on God. To obtain his favour and protection, prayer is necessary. But how absurd it is to mingle impiety and devotion together, to think of prevailing with God in your prayers, while you defy him in your ordinary language and behaviour! Let all endeavour, in their several places, as to forbear themselves, so to reform in others every kind of iniquity; and *this* in particular, which the scripture so solemnly forbids and so awfully condemns—"Above all things, my brethren, swear not, lest ye fall into condemnation; for the Lord will come to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodlily committed, and of all the hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

SERMON XXIX.

The importance of the present season, or the Door of Heaven now open, and soon to be shut.

A Communion Sermon, preached on New Year's Day.

MATTHEW, xxv. 10.

—And the Door was shut.

YOU doubtless remember the connexion in which these words stand—a connexion, which ought to awaken our earnest attention, and deeply to impress our hearts. They are a part of the well known parable of the ten virgins, in which Christ represents to us the nature of the kingdom of heaven, the terms of admission into it, and the character of those who shall be excluded.

"The kingdom of heaven is likened to ten virgins, that took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom," who, according to the custom of

the day, being to conduct his bride home in the night, had invited a number of young female friends to wait at his house, and rejoice with him and his bride on their arrival. These guests, on notice of his approach, were to go forth with lighted lamps, to meet him on the road, accompany him home, and participate with him in the festivity prepared on the occasion. Some of these virgins, considering the uncertain hour of the bridegroom's arrival, and not knowing how long they must wait for him, prudently took with them a supply of oil, that they might keep their lamps burning. The others neglected this precaution. At midnight the cry was made, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." Then the wise virgins, whose lamps still burned, though *they* had slumbered, arose and trimmed them, and went forth. The foolish, finding their lamps expiring, could not accompany their companions, but went another way to procure oil. In the mean time, the bridegroom came, "and they who were ready went in with him to the marriage, *and the door was shut.*" What became of the others? They returned, and called on the bridegroom to open to them. But it was too late. The hour was past; none were now to be admitted. He answered them, "I know you not."

As this parable was designed to illustrate the kingdom of heaven, or the terms of our salvation, it deserves our serious attention.

The shutting of the door implies, that it had been open. There is a time, when the door of Christ's kingdom is open, and when they who come, may be admitted.

By the law of God the door of heaven is shut. This condemns those who continue not in all things written therein to do them. As all have sinned, and, in construction of law, none are righteous,

so by that, the door is shut against *all*; and it cannot be opened by any works which they do; by any prayers which they offer; by any efforts which they make.

But "Christ has set before us an open door. He openeth and no man shutteth; and when he shutteth, no man can open." He in our behalf has obeyed the precepts and suffered the penalty of the law; and by his blood we have liberty to enter into the most holy place in that new and living way, which he has consecrated. Through him we may draw near in the full assurance of faith, and in the strong confidence of hope, that we shall obtain admittance into his heavenly kingdom, whither he has entered for us, as a forerunner.

But what are the *terms* of admittance?

As we are transgressors of the law, we must come to the Saviour by *repentance*.

The law is holy, just and good; we must condemn ourselves, where that condemns us. We cannot be received to favour, while we justify our transgressions and delight in our iniquities. "The law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." It gives us a knowledge of our sins, and makes them appear exceedingly sinful; and thus shews us our weakness, and our dependence on divine mercy. If we seek pardon from the mercy of God, we must feel and confess our desert of punishment. Application to mercy implies a conviction of personal guilt. One who imagines, that he deserves no punishment, will not supplicate exemption from it as a gift of grace, but will demand it as a debt of justice. Repentance therefore is a necessary condition of our acceptance. As Christ came to save sinners, so he came to call them to repentance. This, as a condition of salvation, is proposed, not by the law, but only by the gospel. As the law offers no forgiveness, it makes no provision for re-

pentance. What it demands is perfection; and where this is wanting, its sentence is absolute. Pardon comes in a way of grace, and repentance is a condition of grace, not of law.

If we would enter into the kingdom of heaven, we must come in a way of *faith*.

He who depends not on his own works, but through Christ believes in God as justifying the ungodly, his faith is imputed for righteousness, and accepted to justification. If pardon comes to us through the sacrifice of Christ, through this sacrifice we must seek it. Our reliance must be, not on the excellence of former works, or the value of present repentance, but on the atonement and righteousness of the Redeemer, who was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. David, penitentially imploring the pardon of his sins, acknowledged, God might justly condemn him. He pleaded no worthiness of his own, for he was deeply conscious of his guilt, but he humbly applied to God's abounding mercy. "Have mercy on me according to thy loving kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." "He described and ardently sought the blessedness of the man, to whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered, and to whom the Lord imputeth not sin."

The way into heaven is *purity* of *heart* and *life*. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "The grace of God, which brings salvation, teaches us to live soberly, righteously and godly, and thus to look for the blessed hope of salvation through Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Purity of heart is implied in that repentance and faith, by which we first become interested in the promise of pardon; and the effects of these graces, when opportunity is given, are the works of holy obedience. We shew our faith by its good works, and our repentance by its correspondent fruits.

The character of those who shall enter into Christ's kingdom, is illustrated in this parable of the virgins, by the oil which the wise carried with them, and by their care to trim their lamps. We must have grace in our hearts, and keep this grace in exercise by a faithful attendance on the duties of religion. It is not merely lighting our lamps by an external profession, that will entitle us to a place in Christ's house. The foolish virgins *did this*; but they were shut out from the marriage feast. It is not calling Christ our Lord, and eating and drinking in his presence, which will secure our acceptance. Many, at the last day, will plead as much as this; but will be rejected as workers of iniquity. No distinguished gifts will ensure a claim to heaven. Of some who can say, "In thy name we have cast out devils and done wonderful works," Christ will declare, "He never knew them." It is not an abstinence from the gross forms of vice, which qualifies men for the future reward. The sentence of final condemnation is grounded, not merely on acts of palpable injustice and profaneness, but on the want of benevolence and on the neglect of the duties of piety and charity. It is not an unexecuted resolution of repentance and obedience, which will open to us the door of heaven. While the foolish virgins were gone, in the hour of extremity, to buy the oil, which they ought to have procured before, and to have carried with them, the door was shut, no more to be opened. They only who had oil in their lamps, went in to the marriage.

This suggests to us another important observation; that the time is coming, when the door of Christ's kingdom will be shut.

Against whom will it be shut?—Against all such characters, as are the reverse of those before described—against the unbelieving, impenitent and ungodly.

It will be shut against *infidels*, who have heard and despised the gospel of salvation. They who know not God, and obey not the gospel of his son, will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord; they will be cast into utter darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

It will be shut against *hypocrites*, who in words have confessed Christ, but in works have denied him, and who for worldly ends have assumed the form, but denied the power of godliness.

It will be shut against the *workers of iniquity*—all who have continued such, whatever pretensions they have made of regard to the gospel; for "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

It will be shut against *delaying* sinners. To such the Lord will come in a time, when they look not for him, and will cut them asunder and appoint them their portion with unbelievers and hypocrites.

It will be shut against the *despisers* of God's worship and ordinances. These shall perish wonderfully. God will perform a work, which they would not believe, though one should declare it to them. Hence the caution given by the Apostle; "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together."—"He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy; of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the son of God."

If many, who have eaten and drunk in Christ's presence, and heard him teach in their streets, will be rejected, because they have been workers of iniquity, what will be the doom of those, who not only have been workers of iniquity, but have also treated with *open contempt* Christ's invitations to hear him teach in their streets, and to eat and drink in his presence? These are mockers, walking after their ungodly lusts.

But some will ask, "Ought we to hear Christ teach, and to eat in his presence, while we are workers of iniquity?" Invert the question, and it is easily answered. "Ought we to work iniquity, when we hear Christ teach, and while we eat in his presence? This is the true state of the question; and I dare say, you have already answered it. "Let every man, who names the name of Christ, depart from iniquity."

What is the time here referred to, when the door will be shut?

The *judgment* will shut the door against all impenitent sinners. "God has appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness." Jesus Christ is ordained the judge. Of this God has given assurance by raising him from the dead. He, at the time appointed, will descend from heaven with an innumerable company of angels; will erect his tribunal in the air; will gather all nations before him; will separate, by an exact trial, the righteous from the wicked; will place the former on his right hand, and the latter on his left; *those* he will call to inherit the kingdom prepared for them; *these* he will doom to that place of everlasting punishment, which was originally prepared for the devil and his angels. He will then ascend to his heavenly kingdom, and all the righteous with him. And when they shall have entered, "the door will be shut." And the wicked will be ex-

cluded. No arguments or intreaties will prevail with him to open the door for their admission. None can enter there, who are themselves defiled, or who would corrupt the purity or disturb the peace of the holy and happy inhabitants. "Blessed are they who do God's commandments. They shall enter through the gates into the city. For without are sorcerers, murderers and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." The words import, that if these vile characters were admitted into heaven, no blessedness could be found there. "*Blessed* are they who *enter*, for the filthy and abominable are *without*."

Death will shut the door against all, who, at that momentous period, are found impenitent in their sins. "It is appointed to man once to die, and after this the judgment." Between these solemn events, there is no probation. There is no work in the grave. Death will therefore be as decisive of every man's eternal state, as will be the judgment. From that moment the door will be shut. The great gulf, which is fixed between paradise, and the place of torments, cannot be passed. The rich sinner in the parable could not ascend to paradise, and, being in despair, he did not even propose it; nor could Lazarus descend to the rich man's dreary abode, even though it were only to carry him the small refreshment of a drop of water.

Yea, the scripture gives us reason to believe, that the door of mercy may, in some cases, be shut *before* death. God's spirit will not always strive with men. When this finally departs, there is no repentance, and no pardon. The scripture speaks of some, who are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and given over to a reprobate mind. Hence it cautions us "not to grieve, nor quench the Spirit;" and calls upon us to "know, in our

day, the things, which belong to our peace, lest they be hidden from our eyes."

Our subject demands a most serious attention.

If you hope, that you are of that happy number, whom Jesus, when he comes, will admit into his kingdom, enquire, whether your hope is well founded. The foolish virgins had the same hope; but against them the door was shut. Do you possess the qualifications, which entitle you to admittance, while the door is open? Have you that penitence of soul for sin, that faith in the divine Saviour, that habitual purity of heart, by which you can appropriate the promise of eternal life? Are your hearts attempered to the gospel, and your lives governed by it? Perhaps you can look back to a time, when, you think, you received the grace of Christ, and presented yourselves as chaste virgins to him. The foolish virgins could do the same. But they were deceived. They imagined, they had oil enough in their lamps to keep them burning till the bridegroom came. But they slept, and their lamps went out. The oil in them evaporated, and there was no supply in their vessels. Since you lighted your lamps at God's altar by a good profession, have you kept them burning? While the bridegroom has tarried, have you waited and watched for his arrival? Have you faithfully attended to the duties, which he gave you in charge? If he should come this day, or this night, would he find you doing his will, and ready to go in with him to his feast?

It concerns all to live under an impression of the uncertainty of life. There is a door of hope now open; but the time is near, when it will be shut. They who are ready will be admitted into the house of the great king; others will be excluded. When death has shut the door, it will no more be opened.

We are now beginning a new year. God's mercy has held open the door, and invited us to come in, and his patience has waited till this day. The invitations of mercy have been urged and pressed upon us by solemn warnings. We have seen death often near us. Can we review the past year, and say, "We have stood with our loins girded, and our lamps burning, and, in the faithful performance of the work appointed us, have waited our Lord's coming?"

The door is open still, and still the call of mercy is continued. Let us lay hold on the hope set before us. What may be the events of the year now begun, is a matter hidden from human foresight. As there have been in the year past, so doubtless there will be in the year to come, many removals from among us to the invisible world. And who can say, his own departure is not at hand? Let us this day take a review of life, repent of every sin, commit ourselves to the Saviour, and make a solemn dedication of ourselves to him.

Ye who are young, consider your ways, and turn your feet into the paths of wisdom. This you will find to be pleasantness and peace. Promise not yourselves many years to come. You know not what *this* may bring forth. If you have not begun the religious life, begin it with the year—begin it today. "If you desire many days, that you may see good, keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile; depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, but his eyes are upon the righteous." And come, my friends, come soon, come before another communion, and, joining yourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, seal this covenant at his table. Thus you will confirm your pious resolutions—thus you will encourage and excite one another to love and good works.

Some of us are now about to sit down at the Lord's table. Here we are to renew the covenant, which we have before made. Let us do it in sincerity, and be stedfast in the covenant which we here renew. We hope, that a door is open for us, and that we have secured an entrance into it. Let us by abounding in the virtues of the Christian character make our calling sure, that so we may never fall, but an entrance may be ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

SERMON XXX.

Death inevitable, but the time and manner unknown.

ECCLES. ix. 12.

For man also knoweth not his time; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.

NO advice can be more important, or founded in better reason, than that which Solomon gives in the words a little before the text. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." The present is the proper season to cultivate religious knowledge, to acquire heavenly wisdom, to do good to mankind, and to secure the happiness of immortality; for we are all hastening to the grave, which will forever terminate our short and uncertain space of probation. No worldly interests or designs should divert our attention from the concerns of the future life; for every thing relating to this world is small in its importance, and uncertain in its issue. "The race is not to the swift, nor the

battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill." If we make some good progress, and have a fair prospect of success in our temporal pursuits, yet in the midst of them we may fail; for life is always uncertain. We cannot know the day or the hour, when death will arrest our progress and break our purposes. "Man knoweth not his time; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them." What folly—what presumption is it, then, to neglect or postpone the mighty interests of the future world in regard to the precarious and trifling interests of the present?

The several truths suggested in our text, though too little contemplated, are too obvious to be denied, and too serious to be neglected.

The Preacher remarks, The *uncertainty* of the *time* of death; "Man knoweth not his time."

The *secret manner* of its approach; "As the fishes are taken in an evil net."

The *impossibility* of *deliverance*, when the snare falls; "As the birds are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared."

The *suddenness* of death; "The snare falleth *suddenly* upon them."

The *evil time* when the snare falls; "The sons of men are snared in an evil time."

I. Solomon here reminds us, that the *time* of every man's death is *uncertain* to him; "Man *knoweth not* his time."

There are some circumstances relative to death, which every man fully knows.

He knows the *certainty* of it. He has no more doubt, whether he shall die, than whether he now exists. However averse he may be to the thoughts of death, he never calls in question the event.

This is made certain by the irreversible *judgment of God*, expressly declared in his word. That sentence on Adam, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return," is a sentence on the whole human race. Hence the Apostle says, "Judgment is come on all men to condemnation. In Adam all die. By him sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passes upon all men."

It is also made certain in the *course of providence*. "What man is he that liveth and shall not see death?" The world, we know, has existed for several thousands of years; it has all along been peopled by human beings, and these have all been mortal. Look around. Where will you find any of those who were born a century ago? They are numbered with the dead. Innumerable are those, who have gone down to the grave; and every man is drawing after them. What has been the uniform course of nature, without deviation, for nearly six thousand years past, will be its course in years to come. And we may as well expect perpetual day, or unchanging summer, as hope that we shall live forever and not see death.

As death itself, so also the *nearness* of death is certain. This is what all acknowledge, and what men in all ages have generally complained of. Seventy or eighty years, which now bring us to old age, is a short term, compared with the duration of the world. It is nothing compared with the duration which is to follow. "Thou hast made my days an hand-breadth," says David, "my age is as nothing before thee. Verily, every man, at his best state, is altogether vanity."

As we know death to be certain and near, so we know, it will be a *most solemn* change, when it comes. How great the change will be, we cannot explain; but we know it will be great. We *see*

enough to convince us of this; and we *believe* more than we can see.

If we look on the *body*, we see an affecting alteration. Strength, beauty, sensation, activity, motion are gone; and that, in which these qualities just now resided, is nothing but an unanimated lump of matter, soon to be deposited in the dust, and there to moulder away and be forgotten. When we view this earth on which we tread, it seems almost incredible, that matter taken from this gross mass should be moulded into man. When we contemplate man, in all the beauty and sprightliness of health, it seems as incredible, that what we see of the man should be reduced to earth. And yet both are truths, which cannot be denied. At death "the dust returns to the earth as it was."

This, however, is but a small part of the change, which death makes. The immortal spirit, now dislodged from the body, passes to another world—a world so different from this, that we can form but little conception of it. There it is adjudged to a state of retribution, of which there will be no end. The nature of this retribution will be agreeable to the temper and character of each soul, when it quits the body.

The certainty, nearness and solemnity of death we know. But no man knows the *time* of it. This is in God's hands, and is known only to him. He reveals it not to mortals in any other way, than by the event itself. What we know, is important to be known, that we may be seriously affected with our condition, and zealously excited to our duty. What we know not, is necessary to be concealed, that we may neither be unfitted for the common duties of life by the immediate apprehensions of death, nor emboldened to the neglect of the special duties of religion by the assurance of years to come.

The continuance of life depends on God's preserving influence. When this is withheld, we die. How long he will continue it, he has not revealed to us, nor can we, in our ordinary state, make any probable conjecture about it.

We know not in what *stage* of life, we must depart. They who are advanced in age, know that they shall not die young. But there is no period, in which we can be sure of reaching the period, which next succeeds—no stage in which we can be confident of an arrival to that which lies forward on the road.

Multitudes die in *infancy*. "Death reigns over those who have not sinned, as well as over those who have sinned, after the similitude of Adam's transgression." When we see infants removed by death, we naturally enquire, why they should be sent into the world, if they must be called away before they have done any good, or answered any of the ends of a rational existence? But we ought to remember, that the sovereign and all-wise Creator can make their existence subservient to his own purposes, in ways of which we have no conception. There are also some obvious ends, which their transient life and early death are well adapted to serve. Hereby we are sensibly taught some important lessons, which we could not so well learn from other deaths, or from the more ordinary dispensations of providence. We have here a plain demonstration of the great evil of sin; of the divine displeasure against it; and of the universal prevalence of the original curse, which immediately followed the apostacy. Here we are warned not to place an immoderate confidence in, and affection upon any thing below the heavens; but to direct our supreme regards to an immutable, all-sufficient Being.

But is it not hard, that these little unoffending creatures should suffer so great an evil as death?

We, surely, who have experienced the calamities and temptations of this troublous and ensnaring world, cannot suspect that in their early removal hence, an injury has been done them. Shall we not rather think it a privilege, that these tender shoots are transplanted into the heavenly paradise, where they will escape the rude blasts of our inclement region, and grow up under a milder sky?

Some, who survive the stage of infancy, die in *childhood* and *youth*. "They come forth like a flower and are cut down; they flee as a shadow, and continue not." "They are as the green herb, as the grass on the house top, as corn blasted before it is grown up. In the morning they flourish; before noon they are cut down and withered." While they display many hopeful talents, which flatter the fond expectations of friends; while health wantons in their veins, vigor sparkles in their eyes, activity sports in their limbs, and the springs of life are full and flowing; while their worldly prospects are bright and enchanting, and every thing promises a happy succession of years, they fall the victims of dire disease or of violent casualty, and leave their disappointed friends to mourn their blasted hopes and withered joys.

Do you ask, why the young are thus snatched away? It is to teach surviving youths the necessity of early religion. If none died in this period, none in this period would expect to die. And flattered with the hope of long life, many, perhaps most, would neglect the concerns of their souls, till they were hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. It is to teach parents the importance of a seasonable attention to the religious education of their children. If no parents were deprived of children, all might expect their children to survive them. And few, perhaps, would feel their obligation to assist their children in the great work of prepara-

tion for eternity. But taught by the deaths of other youths, how uncertain are their opportunities to counsel and instruct their own, they will speak a word in season—a word which under such softening providences, will be heard with attention, and felt with unusual sensibility. Few parents, who have lost a child suddenly, will say, they are perfectly satisfied with their conduct towards this child. There are few, under such a trial, but who can think of some errors or omissions, which they wish they could rectify or recall. The parent who hears of a youthful death in another family, should realize the mortality of his own children, and enquire, what omissions he has been guilty of, and what duties remain to be done. What he finds to do, let him do speedily, for there is no device in the grave.

Some die in *full strength.* Their mountain, when it seemed to stand strong, is suddenly overturned. When they are full of worldly cares, their purposes are broken. While a numerous family are leaning upon them, they sink, go down to the pit and make their rest in the dust.

But why are those called away, who are so useful in life, and whose removal makes so many unhappy? It is to teach all not to trust in man, whose breath is in his nostrils; but to trust in God with whom is everlasting strength.

Some die *old* and *full of days*, worn out with infirmities, weary of life, and perhaps a burden to friends.

Few ask, Why these die? They rather ask, Why such should live? It is to teach the young to remember their Creator before this evil day comes. It is to admonish all to provide the comforts of religion against the time when worldly comforts will desert them. It is to prove the gratitude and benevolence of children in attending to those from whom they have received a thousand favors. It is

that the aged may glorify God by patience, and call down blessings on the world by their prayers.

Since the time of death is so various, no man can know his own time. Hence it is the wisdom of every one to be always ready. "Let your loins be girded about," says our Lord, "and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men, who wait for their Lord, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. And if he come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

We proceed to our next observation.

II. Death often approaches men in a *secret unsuspected* manner.

"As the fishes are taken in an evil net, and the birds caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time." While those thoughtless creatures are sporting in their respective elements, or seeking their food as nature directs them, suddenly they are entangled in the hidden snare. So it is with the sons of men. There are as many nets and snares for us, as for them. And we are as blind to our dangers as they. Let the fisherman, when he drops his hook or stretches his net; let the sportsman, when he levels his tube or sets his snare, remember, there may be a net spread and a snare set for him. While he wishes, that the thoughtless fish or silly fowl may be caught in his snare, let him beware, lest he himself, as incautious as they, fall into a snare more fatal; the snare of temptation and sin. Death often sets his snares in places where we think no danger. He may make our employments, our amusements, our refreshments, our comforts, the nets in which to take us. The air which we breathe may be charged with some pestilential quality. The food which we eat, may by

means of some noxious ingredient, or some peculiar state of the body, operate to our destruction. The blood, which is the life, and which distributes health through the body, may become the vehicle of death. An unseen accident may obstruct the circulation of the blood, the dilatation of the lungs, or some other movement of this complicated machine. Immoderate exertion in our labor, or an unnatural position in our sleep may derange the system. Images painted on the scene of fancy in sleep, may decoy or affright us to some fatal action. Common occurrences, such as we have met with safety a thousand times, may, under peculiar circumstances, prove disastrous. Death may attend us in our walks and in our fields, may follow us to our diversions, or our bed chambers; and by a hidden and unsuspected stroke finish our course. The earth; the water; the air; the clouds; cold and heat; storms and winds; the fire which warms us; the houses which shelter us; the beasts which serve us; the business which supports us; the pleasures which amuse us, may in their various ways become the means of our death. The pestilence walks in darkness; we see not its approach. Casualties lie in ambush, and spring upon us unsuspected. Were our senses so acute, or our knowledge so perfect, that we could be apprized of all the dangers which attend us, we should be in continual alarm; there would be terror on every side; we could neither lie down in peace, nor go abroad without anxiety. It is a mercy, that God hides from us many of our dangers; else we could neither possess our minds in patience, nor perform our duty with cheerfulness, nor use the gifts of providence with delight.

Lest, however, we should fall into an indolent security, God is pleased, now and then, to withdraw the curtain, and show us how near death has

been to us, and how narrowly we escaped his power. He now and then brings us into visible danger, and brings us out unhurt. He now and then subjects us to painful wounds, under circumstances which threatened no danger, to teach us that we are always dependent; that we have our being in him; that when he gives quietness, none can make trouble; but when he hides his face, none can behold him.

III. Our next observation is, that when the snares of death fall on the sons of men, there is no way of escape. This Solomon intimates, when he compares the manner of their death to the capture of fishes and birds in a net.

"No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death." We may for a time use means with success for our own, or our friends' preservation. But the fatal hour will come, when no means can be applied, or none will avail. "What man is he that liveth and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" "There is not a man, who can by any means redeem a brother," a companion, a child, or even himself, "that he should live forever and not see corruption." Not only the foolish and simple, the rash and incautious, but also great and wise men die, go to the generation of their fathers, and return no more to see the light. Our times are in God's hands; the bounds which he has appointed, we cannot pass.

Death often seizes mortals in such a manner, that neither they, nor those around them, have means, opportunity or ability to attempt their preservation. The means may be out of their reach, or out of their mind; or the attack may be so violent, or so sudden, as to prevent the application, or defeat the success of them. When death makes a more gradual approach, the ordinary means of preserving

life may be, and soon *will* be unavailing; for these are designed in providence, not to perpetuate, but only to prolong life for a season. The tabernacle in which the soul resides, will soon be broken down by disease or casualty, or worn out by use or age. Then no meaas can repair or restore it. While the body remains a proper receptacle for the soul, and a suitable instrument of its operations, the soul cannot depart from it; longer than this, it cannot stay. Death does not properly consist in the retirement of the rational soul from the body. If it did, who would die? Would not the soul, which has a natural attachment to the body, abide with it? Or how would beasts die, which have no rational soul? There is a previous dissolution of the principal parts of the body, and a consequent cessation of its necessary functions. Then no man can retain the spirit; no art of medicine can restore the broken frame; no arguments can persuade the retiring soul to remain. It is God who takes away the spirit; and when he takes away, who can hinder him? It is he who brings down to the grave; and when he brings down, who can raise himself up?

Let it further be considered, that as there is no escape from death in this world, so for the guilty there is no escape from punishment in the next. Death, whenever it comes, terminates the day of probation. They who die impenitent, die in their sins—under the guilt of all the sins, which they have committed, and under the power of all the ungodly lusts which they have indulged, and all the vicious habits which they have contracted; and they who are unrighteous and filthy, will be so still. There is no work in the grave. When death has done its work, sinners will have no power to recall their iniquities and cancel their guilt; to do the works which they have neglected; to counteract the ill effects of their corrupt example and vain

conversation; to obtain the mercy of God by prayer; to prevent the sentence of condemnation, or flee from the wrath to come.

Let not the strong man glory in his strength, nor the young man in his youth. They are no less exposed to death than the sickly and the aged. The time is coming, when they can make no resistance to the king of terrors, nor escape from the jaws of the grave.

Now the patience of God waits on you; salvation is brought near to you; the terms of it are laid before you. There is a space of repentance; there is free access to the throne of grace. Go, pour out your hearts in God's presence; seek him while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.

If you neglect to call upon him now, will he hear your cry when trouble comes? He calls to you; If you will not hear, you also may call and not be heard, when distress and anguish come upon you. If the snares of death surprize you in your guilt, the pains of hell will next compass you about.

It is amazing to think, that rational creatures, whose eternal salvation is depending, and whose opportunity to secure it is short, should spend their time as thousands do. How lamentable, that the season allowed them for the work of their salvation should be prostituted to folly and guilt. O, be ye wise and understand; consider your end; number your days, and apply your hearts to wisdom.

We will here intermit our subject, and resume it on another opportunity.

SERMON XXXI.

Death often sudden, and in an evil time.

ECCLES. ix. 12.

For man also knoweth not his time; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.

THESE words, as we have already observed, suggest to us, The *uncertainty* of the *time* of our death.

The *secret manner* of its approach. And

The *impossibility of escape*, when the snare falls.

IV. The next thing here suggested, is the *suddenness* of death. "The snare falleth *suddenly* upon them."

There are several senses, in which death may be called sudden.

1. It is sudden, when it surprises mortals *without previous warning*; or at a time, when they have no special reason to expect it.

We have *general* warning of death at all times. But there are cases in which it comes without particular notice, either from the state of the body, or

from visible external circumstances. Such are most cases of casualty by falls, wounds, lightning and drowning. Besides cases of this kind, there are many diseases, whose fatal effects are as sudden and inevitable as those of casualty. From one cause and another a considerable proportion of mankind die in a manner, which we call *sudden*. They are taken as the fishes are caught in a net, and the birds in a snare. Among my own people about one eighteenth part of the deaths have been by casualty, though not all these instantaneous; and many have died as suddenly by disease.

Undoubtedly one principal reason, why providence appoints so many sudden deaths is, that all may hold themselves in readiness. If no deaths were sudden, none would be expected. If all were sudden, they would become too familiar to produce any moral effect. Who more regardless of death, than soldiers in an army? And who see more sudden deaths? In the ordinary course of providence, deaths are diversified in a manner well adapted to awaken mens' attention to, and preparation for their own. This is the language of scripture and of reason; "Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." "Go to, ye who say, Today or tomorrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow; for what is your life? It is even a vapour, which continueth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that. But now ye rejoice in your boasting. All such rejoicing is evil." The folly of such boasting our Lord reproves in the parable of the rich man, who, having laid up goods for many years, said to his soul, "Take thine ease, eat drink and be merry;" But in the midst of his flattering and delusive prospects,

he received the solemn sentence of approaching death. "This night shall thy soul be required of thee." We are commanded to watch, because we know not the hour when our Lord will come.

2. Death, though gradual in its real approach, may be sudden in regard to the work of preparation. To accomplish this effectually, there must be a review of life, an examination of heart, an attention to the calls and promises of the Gospel, a sorrow for and resolution against sin, and a humble application to the mercy of God through the Saviour, who died to redeem a guilty race. In order to such exercises, there must be reason in the head, calmness in the mind, and sensibility in the heart. But how common is it that disease extinguishes them all, and introduces delirium, distress or stupidity.

Besides; In those capable of consideration, the thoughts often take an unhappy turn. When they view eternity opening before them, and reflect on their past abuse of divine grace and patience, their consciences are affrighted at the magnitude of their guilt, and their souls amazed at the nearness of their danger. And though they see their dependence on God's mercy, they hardly dare to place confidence in it, or make application to it. While they suffer God's terrors, they are distracted.

3. The scripture speaks of some, "who, after their hard and impenitent heart, treasure up wrath against the day of wrath,"—of some, "who in the greatness of their folly go astray, are holden in the cords of their sins, and die without instruction,"—of some, "who being often reproved harden their necks, and are destroyed suddenly and without remedy."

Now there is little more reason to hope for the repentance of such persons in a time of sickness, than for the repentance of those who are remov-

ed by a violent casualty. Could the sinner be assured that death, when it came, would approach him with lingering steps, he could from hence draw no reasonable encouragement for the delay of repentance, unless he could also be assured of a sound mind, a tender heart, and a supporting hope.

Death is always sudden, when it is unexpected. To them who cry, Peace and safety, sudden destruction comes. Sodom had warning, but did not regard it; therefore it is said to have been destroyed suddenly, as in a moment. It is not the previous notice of an event, but attention to that notice, which prevents a surprize. You deprecate a sudden death. Tell me, why? You say, Because this will allow you no time for preparation. Beware then, lest you make your death sudden by neglecting preparation, while you have time. It is not the manner in which death comes, but the manner in which you live before it comes, that endangers your souls. If you live in the temper and practice of religion, a sudden death cannot hurt you. If you live in the opposite temper and practice, a slow death will not secure you.

You say, you wish for warning of death by previous sickness, that you may prepare for death by sincere repentance. But for this great work, is not health better than sickness—reason better than distraction—ease better than pain? Attend then to the work, while you have these advantages. When you say, sickness may be a useful warning of death, you acknowledge death to be certain, and preparation necessary. And what warning do you need? Why do you wish to be painfully admonished of an event which you already know, when that very admonition which you wish for, will place you under great disadvantages, for the work which you contemplate? Improve the warnings which you have, and the other will not be needful. If you neglect the former, the other, I fear, will come in vain.

If you knew, you were to live a given time; say three or four years, would you pray, that some of the last months of that time might pass in pain of body, and anguish of mind? No: You would think it more desirable to enjoy health to the last, that you might be in a better capacity to prepare for death. And is it not for the same reason, equally desirable to enjoy health to the last, though you know not how long you shall live? Be wise, attend to your duty, and you need not fear a sudden death. It is your own folly, which makes the last severe warning needful; and the same folly may defeat the warning, when it is given. The blessedness of Christ's servants depends not on the time of his coming, but on the manner of their waiting. He may come, when they think not; but if, when he comes, he shall find them doing his will, all is well; he will approve them as faithful, and pronounce them happy. The only way to prevent death from being sudden, is to live every day in readiness for it.

V. Our last observation is, that the snare of death falls on some in an *evil time*.

1. Death comes in an evil time to those, whom it finds too deeply immersed in the cares of the world.

We cannot entirely disconnect ourselves with the world, until we go out of it. We have bodies to sustain, families to support and friends to serve. Every man has, or ought to have some honest calling, and in this to abide. It is a precept of the gospel, "Study to be quiet, and do your own business." A man who is not attentive to some business of his own, is seldom quiet himself, or content to leave others so. We must not imagine, that abstraction from the occupations of the world is necessary to our preparation for heaven. No man goes to heaven in idleness. This is a vice in itself, and a source of many other vices. But our Sav-

iour cautions us, "Let not your hearts be *overcharged* with the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, lest the day of the Lord come upon you unawares; for as a snare shall it come on those who dwell on the earth." The Apostle instructs us, that we must not so care for the things of the world, but that we may attend on the Lord without distraction. We must have secular cares; but not encumber ourselves with such a weight, nor distract ourselves with such a multiplicity of cares, as shall absorb our thoughts, engross our time, and fill our minds with temporal anxieties; for thus we shall either shut out the special duties of piety, or attend upon them in a heartless, hasty, superficial manner. Even good Christians are sometimes too much swallowed up in the concerns of the present life. At such times they are not in the best preparation to pass to the other world. They have not so bright evidence of their title to heaven, as they would choose, nor are they in the best frame for entering into a world entirely different from this. If they viewed death as just at hand, they would set their houses and their hearts in order, and call up a more devout and spiritual frame. If death should surprise them in this negligent and disordered state, it would come in an evil time. It is the wisdom of the Christian, while he is diligent in the duties of his calling, to watch against the ensnaring influence of earthly objects; while he lives in the world, to live above it; while he employs his hands in its works, to keep his heart pure from its pollutions. "The end of all things is at hand; be ye sober and watch unto prayer." "The time is short; buy as if ye possessed not, and use the world as not abusing it." "Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand."

2. Death comes in an evil time to those, who are engaged in the *pleasures* and *amusements* of the world.

However innocent we may suppose common diversions to be, when used seasonably and moderately, yet none would choose to be employed in them at the hour when death approaches. If they be not inconsistent with the *habitual temper* of piety, (and we cannot say that they are) yet at least, while they last, they are incompatible with those devout sentiments and feelings with which we should choose to pass from this to another world; and it is well, if they leave not on the mind a coldness to the pleasures of religion. The good Christian, wherever he may be, is near to heaven. But who had not rather pass from his closet than from a ballroom—from the sanctuary than from a hotel—from the humble exercises of devotion than from the gay amusements of company, to the general assembly above, to the society of saints and angels, and to God the Judge of all?

3. Death comes in an evil time to those who are unprepared.

May we not fear that it comes to many of such a character? Alas! how awful must be the consequence. There is no work in the grave to which they go. If death surprise them in their guilt, their sins will remain in them, and the wrath of God abide on them. This is the day of salvation; to this succeeds an endless retribution. In the other world, there are no offers of mercy; no calls to repentance; no striving of the spirit; no promises of pardon. How deplorable, then, the state of those, to whom death comes, before they have obtained the pardon of their sins by repentance, and secured a title to salvation by faith in the Redeemer?

Are there not many, who view themselves as still impenitent and unpardoned? If the snares of death should now fall on you, Would they not take you in an evil time? These snares you cannot pre-

vent; but you may prevent the evil of them. Immediate repentance of sin, and humble application to the mercy of God in Christ, are your only security. What your hands find to do, do it with your might.

I have illustrated the several observations contained in our text. And your attention to them, and improvement of them, are solemnly urged by the affecting providence which you have lately seen in this place.* An event so awakening and impressive has seldom been known in this vicinity. Four amiable maidens, in the bloom of youth, in the sprightliness of health, in the cordiality of mutual friendship, and in the cheerfulness of innocent amusement, without previous apprehension of danger, were suddenly plunged into deep waters, and there lost, irrecoverably lost. No efforts of their own could extricate them, no pitying hand could reach them. No human power could rescue them. How dreadful the surprise, when the vessel in which they trusted, filled and went down! How distressing the scene to the spectators, who, summoned by the shrieks of distress, hastened to the spot, but stood impotent on the shore! How overwhelming the spectacle to

* On Saturday the 15th July, 1809, about 5 o'clock P. M. four young ladies, three of them from 15 to 16, and one about 11 years of age, were drowned in Congomond Pond, in Southwick, viz. Julia Stratton, daughter of Mr. John Stratton, Jun. Mary Langdon, only daughter of Lt. Roswell Langdon, and Charlotte and Orpha Cannon, daughters of Mr. Clark Cannon, all of them inhabitants of Southwick. With a view to collect pond lilies, they took a small boat and pushed to a little distance from the shore; and, as is conjectured from some concurring circumstances, she who held the setting pole, which was short, making an effort to push forward the boat in a place where the bottom was unexpectedly out of her reach, fell over; the others running hastily to the stern for the relief of their companion, by their weight and irregular motion, turned the boat in such a manner, that they fell out after her. Several people soon came to the place, among whom was Mr. Cannon the father of two of the young women, who was at work a little distance from the pond, and heard the lamentable cries of his beloved children; and attempts were made to save them, but without success. The bodies were recovered; one in about 20 minutes, and others in not less than 2 hours. The means used for their resuscitation were ineffectual. Their bodies, the next day, were all, in separate coffins, laid side by side in the same grave.

friends and relatives, to parents, to him, who, after repeated unavailing exertions to save them, to save two daughters of his own, yielded at last to despair! How shocking the intelligence, when it reached the families, to which the lovely maidens belonged! Literally in them were verified the words of our text. "As the fishes are taken in an evil net, and the birds caught in the snare; so were they snared in an evil time, when it fell suddenly upon them."

Ye distressed and mourning parents; we compassionate you; we pray for you. But what shall we say to comfort you?—We can speak to your ears; God only can speak to your hearts. In the multitude of your thoughts within you, may his comforts delight your souls. Look up to him by faith and prayer. He is the fountain of consolation. He has wounded, and he can heal. He has laid his rod heavily upon you; but his hand can support you. You know, and you have lately felt, how a father pities his children; so the Lord pities them who fear him.

Realize his sovereignty, and say, He gave, and he has taken away. Adored be his name. Call to mind his promises, and especially those which respect his children in affliction; and review your past experience of his providential goodness; and I hope I may add, of his grace to your souls. When trouble is near, he is not afar off. Let this day of sorrow be a day of self-examination. Do you love God more than these? Are your affections placed on things above, rather than on things below? Can you give up your mortal interests at God's call? Have you given yourselves to him to be saved by his grace, governed by his will, and disposed of by his providence? Have you been faithful in your domestic relations? Let conscious failures be corrected by future fidelity.

Be thankful, that God, who has a right to take from you all your children, has still left you some. May they live to be your comfort and joy. That you may rejoice in them, lead and guide them by your counsel and example in the path of wisdom and piety.

Think daily of the uncertainty of their lives, and of your own. Be prepared yourselves, and assist them to prepare for an event as solemn and sudden, as that which you have seen; for man knoweth not his time.

The *suddenness* of your children's death is a painful circumstance. Had they been removed by sickness, you could have attended upon them; you could have sat by their beds and given them your last counsels; you could have learned *from* them what were their viéws and hopes; you could have prayed for them; and stretched out a parental hand to lead them to the Saviour. These circumstances would have mitigated your sorrow. God has ordered their exit otherwise. Submit to his will. What he does, you know not now; but you will know hereafter. You still have comfort. They have been lovely and obedient children. Their manners have been pleasing to you, and agreeable to others. They were not driven away in works of wickedness, but in an innocent employment. You cannot accuse yourselves or them of any misconduct or imprudence as the cause of their death. Whether they were children of God by his renovating grace; what had been done for them before, or was done near the time of their exit, mortals cannot know, nor should you be curious to enquire. If you arrive safe to heaven, you will approve of the manner in which God has disposed of them. Your concern now is with the living, not with the dead.

The anguish, which you now feel, will abate with time; but see that you retain the serious impres-

sions which you feel, and pious resolutions which you form, and that you pay the vows which your lips have uttered in the day of trouble. If religious sentiments should seem to abate, awaken them by recurring to the present painful scene. May your affliction, which for the present is grievous, yield to you and to your surviving children, the peaceable fruits of righteousness; and may happy experience teach you and them, that God is faithful in his corrections.

We take a share in the sorrow of our young friends, who are now lamenting the sudden and untimely death of their beloved sisters. May God impart to you his comforting and sanctifying grace, lead you to a wise improvement of this solemn warning, and prepare you for that world, where is no more death, and where all tears will be wiped away. Your wise and pious attention to this providence will be a comfort to you, a refreshment to your parents and an instructive pattern to the young around you.

To the young in general this providence speaks aloud.

You are now in the same blooming health, as were those departed youths a few days ago. You see numbers older than you, and flatter yourselves that your death is remote. Might not they, the moment before the snare fell on them, indulge the same flattering thoughts? They are gone. Their surprising death forbids your confidence in futurity, your boasting of tomorrow. Among those of your age, the proportion of deaths by disease is less, but the proportion by casualty is greater, than among those in more advanced life. It seems to be the intention of providence to rebuke the gaiety incident to your age, and urge that serious meditation on death, which you are too unapt to admit.

Consider, I beseech you, how certain death is; how near it may be; how suddenly it may surprise you; and how unable you will be to escape from it, when once it arrests you. Examine your past manner of life. What, my dear friends, have you been doing? To what objects have your thoughts been directed? To what purpose has your time been employed? What preparation have you made for another world? Are you in readiness for a sudden death?

Attend to your salvation. It is the one thing needful. Attend to all the duties of religion. These are the means of salvation. Never neglect a present duty in reliance on a future opportunity. The future is uncertain. Never think yourselves safe, till the temper of religion is formed in your hearts, and the practice of it becomes pleasant to your souls. Dedicate yourselves to God to serve him in newness of life. Do it without delay. Do it now. Do it in humble reliance upon, and fervent supplication for the presence of his sanctifying Spirit. Whatever evidence you have, or may hereafter have of the sincerity of your repentance, and the soundness of your conversion, indulge not such a confidence of your safety, as shall make you careless of duty. Whenever you thus pervert your hopes, you betray the corruption of your hearts. It is by walking in the fear of God that you will walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost.

If a sense of the importance of religion is, by the late providence, or other means, awakened in you, do nothing to extinguish it. You will thus grieve the spirit. Serious sentiments suppressed may not return.

Shun all vain and sinful company. Say with David, "Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of God." Perhaps you will ask, whether all social amusements are crimi-

nal? We need not say that they are. But in order to judge of the expedience of particular amusements, enquire, What effect they usually have on those who frequently practise them, or have on yourselves? If in their nature, by frequency or through excess, they dissipate religious convictions, silence an awakened conscience, beget an indifference to the exercises of devotion, and thus produce an habitual carelessness of mind in spiritual concerns, then you know, that they are so far unsafe, and so far you must decline them. Let the care of your salvation predominate in your minds, and you will seldom find it difficult to judge *what recreations* you may use, or *how far* you may use them. Let this then be your rule; never to seek such company as would corrupt your virtue, nor to pursue such amusements as would extinguish your seriousness; never to neglect real duty for the sake of a mere pleasure, nor to hazard your eternal salvation for a transient entertainment.

If any of you are under serious impressions, let the late providence fix them, and give them permanence. Contemplate the uncertainty of life, which you have been so solemnly taught, and hold yourselves in readiness for death, which may nearly await you. When you go forth to your labors, set God before you, act as in his presence, and commend yourselves to his protection. Let the future world be much in your thoughts, and keep up a regard to it in all that you do. Let your attendance on the exercises of devotion be made subservient to charity and piety, peace and holiness; thus your zeal will provoke very many.

The late providence deserves the serious attention, not of the afflicted parents *only*, but of heads of families *in general.*

You see the uncertainty of the lives of your children. Do your duty to them while they are with

you. Give them timely instructions and warnings. Moderate your natural affection for them as children; but increase your religious concern for them as immortal beings, who are to exist in another world, and who, while they are here, must be trained up for a *happy* existence. Commend them to the providence and grace of God in your daily prayers, encourage every virtuous appearance, check every evil propensity, and animate them in the religious life by exhibiting the amiableness of it in your own.

Let us all stand prepared for the changes of this mortal state. The most of us can say, "Our houses are in peace, our children are about us, the candle of the Lord shines on our heads, and there is no rod of God on our dwelling." *But* soon the scene may be shifted; we cannot tell what shall be on the morrow; what tidings the next hour may bring. Death may now stand unseen at our door, with a warrant to arrest some of our number. Soon our pleasure may be turned into anguish, our joy into mourning. Let our hearts be fixed, trusting in the Lord, that we may not be afraid of evil tidings.

To conclude; Awakened by the late loud and solemn admonition, let us immediately prepare for our departure hence, and for the changes, which await us while we are here. For this purpose we must make religion our employment, heaven our object, and God's word our rule of conduct. We must walk by faith in unseen things, secure an interest in the promises, cast our cares on the providence of God, and commit our souls to him in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator. Keeping heaven in our eye, let us move on toward it with a steady pace, accounting all the sufferings of the present time unworthy to be compared with the glory, which shall be revealed. And let us esteem nothing dear to us, that so we may finish our course with joy, and lay hold on eternal life.

SERMON XXXII.

Unworthy Guests excluded from the Marriage Feast.

A COMMUNION SERMON.

LUKE, xiv. 24.

I say unto you, that none of those men, which were bidden, shall taste of my supper.

THESE words are the conclusion of the well known parable of the marriage feast. It is thus introduced, "A certain man made a great supper and bade many." The introduction in St. Matthew's relation of it, is a little varied; "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, who made a marriage for his son."

It was common among the Jews, and other ancient nations, for rich and great men to make feasts for the entertainment of such as they chose to honour. The guests invited were usually their friends and favorites. At these feasts were provided all accommodations, which were necessary to render the conviviality delightful. There were garments to ar-

ray the attendants in a manner suitable to the occasion; water to wash their hands and feet; food to regale the appetite and please the taste; wine to exhilarate the spirits; musick to charm the ear; and subjects of discourse to amuse or instruct the mind. Hence the Jews were accustomed to contemplate the felicities of good men in a future state, under the notion of a sumptuous entertainment. In conformity to their usages and language, our Saviour illustrates his heavenly dispensation by the allegory of a feast, which a king made on occasion of his son's marriage. The great supper in the parable represents the blessings of the gospel; such as the forgiveness of sins, the influences of the holy Spirit, communion with God, and the joys and glories of heaven.

Under the Jewish dispensation, there were several annual festivities divinely instituted for moral and religious purposes. The gospel dispensation, which is more plain and simple, conveys religious sentiments less by emblems and figures, and more by direct instructions. It contains only one festivity, and this, like the gospel itself, simple in its form, obvious in its design, and easy in its application In this we eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Christ: Thus we shew forth his death, and recognize his resurrection, with the glorious benefits resulting from them. It is not our coming to, and partaking of this ordinance; but it is the faith, repentance, love and obedience professed in the outward action, which entitle us to the spiritual blessings.

The supper mentioned in the parable is not the ordinance now called the *Lord's supper;* for this was not then instituted. The metaphorical supper, however, has much the same intention as the literal supper. Both denote the blessings of divine grace, and the manner in which we may become interested in them. We are to come to the literal supper with the same views and tempers, with

which the guests in the parable were to come to the marriage feast. We are to come with prompt obedience and cordial affection to the king, and with friendly and charitable dispositions to our fellow guests.

The king says to his servant in the text, "None of those men, who were bidden, shall taste of my supper." To understand this denunciation, we must recur to the parable. The king had already sent his invitation to a number of wealthy people to come and sup with him; and at supper time, he ordered a servant to go and tell them who were bidden, that the supper was prepared, and they must come immediately. But they all with one consent made excuse, alledging, that their worldy engagements and domestic connexions were such, that they could not attend on the feast without great inconvenience. On one pretext and another, they rejected the invitation. The king, being informed, how his liberality had been treated, sent his servant among a different class of people; among the poor, maimed and blind in the streets and lanes of the city, in the hedges of the fields, and in the highways of the country, with positive instructions to call as many as he could find, and compel them to come in, that his house might be filled; "for," said he, "None of those men, who have been bidden," who have heard and refused the former invitation, "shall taste of my supper." This declaration respects not the poor and maimed, who were next to be bidden, but the rich worldlings who had before been bidden, once and again, and bidden in vain.

They who symbolize with the characters described in the former part of the parable, are the men, who will be excluded from the blessings of the gospel, represented in the great supper. It is important, then, that we attend to our own characters,

and examine our claim to these inestimable blessings.

One said to the messenger, who called him, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused." Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused." A third said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Is it a fault, then, to buy a farm, and to see it after it is bought? Or to purchase oxen for one's husbandry, and to prove whether they will answer the design? Or to form family relations, and attend to the duties of those relations? By no means. But the fault of these men lay in placing their affections so entirely on earthly objects, as to neglect their future and eternal interest, and despise the means of securing it. The interests of the present and the future world are so diverse, that without a heart weaned from the former, we are not capable of possessing and enjoying the latter. "We cannot serve God and mammon; if we hold to the one, we shall despise the other."

Weanedness from this world consists not in total indifference, but in rational moderation. While we dwell in the body, we ought to regard the things needful for the body, and to seek them with prudent and honest industry. But to the blessings, with which our future and eternal felicity is connected, we must give a preference in some measure proportionable to their superior importance. In order to our giving them this decided preference, our minds must be assimilated to them. We must not only appreciate them in our judgment and commend them in our language, but also love and relish them in our hearts. If we have this holy and heavenly temper formed in us, we shall not neglect our spiritual in order to advance our secular interest; but we shall seek first the kingdom of

God and his righteousness, and trust our heavenly Father for the addition of such other things, as he sees to be needful. To know what is our character, we must examine where our affections concentrate. "They who are after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh; and they who are after the spirit, the things of the spirit. And to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

True religion is seated in the heart. That sincerity or purity, on which the gospel lays such immense weight, consists in a conformity to its doctrines and precepts, to the moral character of God and the pattern of Jesus Christ. Hence it is expressed by our being cast into the form or mould of the gospel, sealed by the holy spirit of promise, renewed after the image of God, and having the same mind as is in Christ.

There may be an external conformity to the gospel, when the mind is opposite to it. It is observable, that Christ usually takes the characters, which are to be excluded from his kingdom, not from the openly vicious and profligate, but from men of decent and civil manners.

They in the parable, who were not to taste of the king's supper, were not accused of having obtained their lands or their oxen by fraud or oppression: They bought them and paid for them. But their guilt lay in the attachment of their hearts to these objects. The rich fool, who, having laid up goods for many years, promised himself a long course of mirth and pleasure, is not charged with injustice in acquiring his property, nor with inhumanity in using it; but his guilt lay in that predominant worldly affection, which prompted him to lay up treasure for himself, when he was not rich toward God. In the description of the last judgment, the sentence against those who are found guilty, is grounded,

not on open vice, but on the want of piety and virtue. The Judge does not say, I was hungry because ye stole from me my bread; or naked because ye robbed me of my clothes, or sick because ye wounded or poisoned me; or in prison because ye oppressed and persecuted me; but I was in these calamitous circumstances, and ye did not minister to me. The same instruction and warning we find in almost all those parables and discourses, in which Christ discriminates men's different characters, and illustrates the qualifications necessary for admission into his presence.

This is a matter, my brethren, which deserves our impartial attention, and should lead us to serious enquiry.

We are, perhaps, industrious in our occupations, frugal in our expences, temperate in our enjoyments, honorable in our intercourse, civil in our language, and decent in our manners. So far is well. We never shall be condemned for these traits in our character. We compare ourselves with men of open and notorious wickedness, and conclude, we shall not be condemned at all.

But there is a further enquiry to be made. What is the temper of our minds? Have we respect to all God's commands? Do we love them because they are holy, and because by them we are warned? Do we hate every false way, our own sins, our secret sins? Do we relish the things which make heaven happy, such as communion with God and the exercises of devotion and piety? Do we forego our worldly interest, when it interferes with our duty, and suspend our secular occupations in obedience to the calls of religion?

By such enquiries we are to decide the question, whether we shall be found among the guests who are to taste of the marriage supper, or among those who shall be excluded.

There is another circumstance to be considered in the conduct of the excluded guests. They neglected the *present* call, which proved to be the *last*.

There seems to have been nothing in them more culpable, than what may be seen in thousands now. They were not avowed infidels. They did not *in words* deny the dignity, or spurn the goodness of the king, nor intimate a resolution never to come to any feast which he might prepare. But they pleaded the exigence of present business, and declined a compliance with *this invitation*. "We pray thee, have us excused."

Are there none of the same disposition now? My friends; you are this day invited to the marriage supper of the king's son. You are called to come and receive the pardon of all your sins by repentance toward God, and to lay hold on the promise of eternal life by faith in his son, who has purchased it by his blood and offers it by his grace. Do you delay for the present? Do you postpone the time of accepting the call? Say then, wherein you differ from those excluded guests. You will say, "They had been called before. The servant was sent to those who had been bidden." This is true. And is it not as true of you? Have you not been bidden before now; and bidden scores, and hundreds of times? And do you still refuse the invitation? Why are you not in the same predicament with the men who were never to taste of the supper?

"But the messenger told them, All things were ready; the very time was come for their attendance, and there must be no delay." Yes; and is not the same said to you? All things are ready for you. God's mercy is revealed; Christ's blood has been shed; an atonement is made; the holy Spirit is given; the promise of pardon and life is proclaimed; the invitations are sent abroad; the

table is spread. Will things ever be more ready than they are now?

"But this was their *last* call. They were never to have another." True still. And do you know, that this is not your case? Had they not as much reason to expect another call, and another opportunity to attend the feast, as you have? One asked only time to see his farm; and another, time to prove his oxen. This would not be long; perhaps not more than a day or two. And they imagined, that, when the business in hand was dispatched, they should be at pefect liberty; and the king was rich; he could make another feast. And you, it is probable, have only some temporary objections, which, you think, will not lie in your way at a future time. For, I suppose, there is not one of you, that has determined never to obey the call of the great King. But do you not think, that those men, if they had been invited the next day or next week, would still have found objections? The same worldly spirit, which could make so much of such trifling matters, would have suggested something of equal magnitude at any other time. Their admission depended on a prompt compliance with the call, when it was given. And so may yours. You delay on some excuse or other. And, for aught you or I know, you may as well delay to-morrow as to-day. The love of sin and of the world invents excuses, and it will still be fruitful in its inventions. If you listen to its suggestions, it will repeat them, or devise new ones. If ever you submit to the overtures of divine grace, you must bring the business to a point, break through all impediments, and delay no longer. And why may not this be done now, as well as hereafter?

You still flatter yourselves, that you shall have another call. But had not the men under consideration as much reason to expect this as you have?

They never had another. The same may be the case with some of you. So much is certain; No future time will be more favourable than the present. "Now is the accepted time, and the day of salvation."

The commands of Christ respect the present time. They tolerate no delay. He no where tells you to repent tomorrow, to submit to him next week, to reform your life a month hence. What he requires you to do, you must do quickly.

He once called on a certain man, who had heard his doctrines and seen his works, to arise and follow him. "Yes," says the man, "I will follow thee; but suffer me first to go and bury my father."

Jesus answered, "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Christ certainly did not forbid a decent respect for aged parents, while they were living, nor a decent interment of them when they were dead. But the man wished to be excused from following Christ just then, lest the old man, offended by his conduct, should disinherit him. It was respect for the world rather than for his father, that interfered in the case. For he might be a disciple of Christ, and still perform every filial duty, which he owed to a parent. If following Christ would deprive him of the paternal inheritance, he might let it go. There would be men enough to take it, and support the father while he lived, and bury him when he was dead. "Let the dead bury their dead; but follow thou me."

Another, hearing this conversation, said to Jesus, "I will follow thee, and follow thee soon. Only just allow me to go and bid them farewell, who are at home, at my house." Jesus answered, "No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Christ never disapproved of decent civilities among friends and relatives. But in this man's pro-

posal something was implied more than he expressed. In taking leave of his friends to follow Christ, he would consult their wishes, ask their opinions, hear their objections, and relinquish his new and feeble resolutions. This was not a case, nor a time, in which he might safely confer with flesh and blood. He was already convinced of the divine authority of his teacher, and of the importance of embracing and spreading his religion; and there could be no justifiable cause for hesitancy and delay. The man who deliberates and seeks advice in a case of plain, obvious and important duty, is only studying evasions of duty, and contriving excuses to pacify his conscience in the neglect of it; and he is already more than half an apostate.

Further; The whole story of the marriage supper is figurative. The spiritual kingdom of Christ is here illustrated by similitudes taken from earthly things. The gospel dispensation is compared to a great supper. The invitation to attend it was first sent to opulent farmers. By them it was rejected; for they had a fulness at their own tables. It was next carried to the poor and impotent people, who were begging in the streets. To them it was acceptable; for they felt their misery and necessity, and could not but rejoice in the happiness of being guests at a royal table.

So it is in the kingdom of Christ. They who trust in themselves, that they are righteous, look not to the Saviour for pardon. The poor and impotent—they who feel their guilt and misery, know their need of a Saviour and to them he is precious. To them it is a doctrine glorious and acceptable, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

Christ's message to the church in Laodicea illustrates this circumstance in the parable. "Thou art lukewarm, neither cold nor hot." Though

thou hast not openly rejected my religion, yet thou art not engaged in it. Why? "Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." But thy real condition is just the reverse. "Thou knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." This, though thou boastest of the contrary, is thy true state. "I therefore counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear; and to annoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore and repent."

The gospel plan excludes boasting. Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty or noble are called; but God has chosen the base, weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise, mighty, and noble, that no flesh should glory in his presence. Christ came to save them who are lost. They who feel not themselves to be lost, will not trust in him to save them. He came to call sinners to repentance. The call is disregarded by those who are unconvinced of their guilt and pollution. The knowledge of sin by the law is a necessary preparative to receiving Christ by faith. If the gospel were to be preached to a race of beings, who never had offended their maker, but remained perfectly innocent and righteous, they would not know how to understand the doctrines, which teach salvation by sovereign grace without works, and justification by the righteousness of another, and not by their own; nor how to apply the precepts, which require repentance of sin, and faith in one, who came to save them from punishment. And they who are exalted in their own supposed goodness, can no more understand and apply these doctrines and precepts, than such a race of beings,

rightly disposed, all things are ready. You wish you may be admitted to eat bread with Christ in his heavenly kingdom. Will you not eat bread with him here? Your devout attendance on this supper will assist your preparation for, and afford you a foretaste of the great supper in heaven. Does the world, its interests, manners, company and occupations detain you? Give them up; and accept the invitation of your Redeemer. If you knew, that, in relation to this ordinance, it would in a few weeks be denounced, that none who had been bidden and still neglected, should taste of the supper, you would probably come without longer delay. Such may soon be your situation; therefore hear your Saviour's gracious voice, while it is called to-day, lest he speak with a different voice to-morrow. Banish all excuses, obey his affectionate call. And let every one, who nameth the name of Christ, and eateth at his table, depart from iniquity, and by the purity of his life make it manifest to all, that he has been with Jesus.

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